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MARILAND STORIES

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BY

ALFRED A. GRACE

NELSON, N.Z.
ALFRED G. BETTS
1895.

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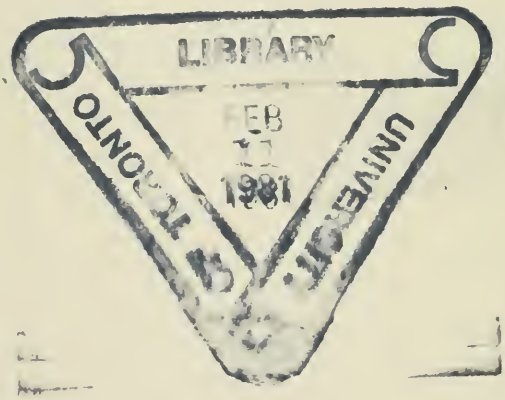

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ALFRED G. BETTS,
PRINTER,
NELSON, NEW ZEALAND.

OUTWARD BOUND.

I.

There 're many ships gone out to sea—
Ho ! Ho ! There too are storms abroad—
But where they sail why should not we,
Though loud the boisterous winds have roar'd ?
The seas were made for great and small,
A highway built to carry all ;
And where floats proud the mighty craft
' Tis safe for ships of little draught,
Staunch in board, and tight in seam.
Ho ! Ho ! Though bitterly the winds have laught,
Though billows roar, and storms should scream,
A ship, to voyage the world about,
Must put to sea. Then launch her out !

II.

All vessels, cruising near or far,
Some sailing east, some sailing west,
Had every one to cross the bar,
And trust to Fortune for the rest.
And when beneath the hatches stowed,
Lies our full cargo, load on load,
Why longer in the harbour stay ?
Heave up the anchor ! Let's away,
And boldly venture from the shore.
Mark you, a merry breeze sets down the bay,
Then spread the canvas, aft and fore.
Why tarry on the ocean's brink ?
Sail out ; nor fear the craft will sink.

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The Chief's Daughter.

"Thro' perils both of wind and limb.
Thro' thick and thin she followed him."

Butler.

A NATIVE Land Court was sitting in the township by the lake, and Craig had gone there with the idea of painting from Maori models. He was an artist: and he found there every type of Maori to choose from; the grizzled, tattooed old warrior; the lean and bent old hag; the stoutly built, muscular Maori of middle age; the ponderous Maori matron; the lithe, agile youth, and the beautifully rounded, graceful girl.

One afternoon, he took his easel and other paraphernalia, with the intention of painting a picture which might be a memento of the lake, in times to come, and a remembrance of the beauty that enshrouds it.

Walking for some distance along the water's edge, he at length came upon a view that was particularly beautiful. There was, in the foreground, a grey crag which overshadowed the lake and stood up from the midst of green

foliage which grew down to the water's edge: between this crag and the spot where he stood lay a pretty stretch of sandy beach: in the far distance beyond the blue water were the snow-clad mountains and smoky-blue, forest-clad hills: in the middle distance a canoe floated lazily along. The waters of the lake were serenely still and calm. The air was so clear and still that he could hear, as the canoe drew nearer, the peculiar sound which the stroke of the paddles made above the song of the rowers.

For some time he continued absorbed in sketching on to his canvas the beautiful features of the scene, and as the canoe drew nearer to the little bay wherehe sat it was evident that its occupants intended to land there.

Before many minutes had passed, the canoe had touched the beach, and was emptied of its brown passengers. It was a large war canoe, built to hold some fifty warriors, though the party which landed from it consisted of not more than a score of Maoris, men and women, clothed in flax garments white as snow. At the head of the band walked an old grey-headed chief, tatooed to the highest perfection of the art. Craig stepped forward to meet him, and held out his hand as a sign of greeting.

'Welcome!' exclaimed the Englishman, in Maori, of which tongue he knew something, 'welcome, though I know not who you are.'

'And greeting to you from Tama-arangi, chief of the Ngatituwharetoa,' answered the warrior, placing his hand in Craig's, and standing proudly erect, the noble spokesman of a noble race. 'These are my young men,

and these my wives,* and this,' leading forward a beautiful young girl, tall and strong, yet so lissom of form that her every movement was accompanied by a gracefulness of which a princess need not have been ashamed, 'this is Hinerau,† my daughter.'

'And I,' answered the Englishman, 'my name is Craig. I am a stranger to you, but I have long known your name.'

'We greet you,' said the chief, 'and we are glad to see your face. In the name of the tribe Tuwharetoa, I welcome you as a friend. As one *rangatira* greets another, so let our greeting be. It is well.'

Hinerau was standing close by her father's side, he holding Craig's hand in his : and she looked openly into the Englishman's face, as though to discern what manner of man he was ; her grace of form being accompanied by an open ingenuous manner which was the outcome of an innocent and pure mind. She was of some seventeen years, having no tatoo marks on her lower lip, as was the usual custom with the women of her race ; round of limb; the soft brown of her complexion showing a faint crimson blush on her cheek, as the Englishman, tall and strong, looked down on her and displayed by his exqression of face the pleasure he felt in beholding her. Her face was one that was pathetic in repose, but full of

*—A chief was, in those days, and is perhaps in some parts now, the possessor of many wives, generally two to six in number. In reality but one of these was his wife, the others being slaves.

†—*Hinerau* means 'the maid among a hundred'—a name worthy of being given to a chief's favourite daughter.

gaiety and life when aroused by any incident that pleased. She was such a creature as Diana may have been, but darker of complexion perhaps, though no less beautiful.

Her large brown eyes looked into the Englishman's face, and then were bent upon the ground at her feet, as though she had suddenly discovered that the man whom she had scrutinized closely though not inquisitively was in some way her superior, not in person, but in being, and that she durst not look on him as she might upon an equal of her own race. There was a touch of reverence in her attitude, and not a little maiden modesty—and yet she could not forbear glancing again from beneath her dark lashes at Craig, and yet again after that. Then she suddenly grasped her father's hand, as though to lead him away.

'Stay,' said Craig, 'I want you to wait here a little while.'

He then went before and, motioning the way, led them to the foot of the crag, and placed the girl and her father, who willingly complied with his unspoken request, together with some half-dozen more of the tribe, in a picturesque group under the foot of the cliff. And some more he grouped about the canoe, and then went back to his easel and, without delay, produced, in a 'study,' the animation that was needed to make his picture Art—whilst the rest of the Maoris stood round him and criticised his work, asking him questions and indulging in banter, as Maoris love to do.

When he had finished his sketch, he showed the result to old Tama; and it won his admiration. But Hinerau

could scarce notice his work, so often did her eyes wander from it to the face of the man who made it.

Next day found Craig at the same spot. His landscape was progressing. There, on the canvas, he had reproduced, in miniature, the features of the beautiful panorama of mountains before him: the high grey cliff was there, jutting up from the beach; one side of it lapped by the blue waters of the lake and the other clothed with the dark green foliage of luxuriant shrubs; its face perpendicular to the water which had washed out a deep hole at its base; its peak, approachable from the landward side by a gradual ascent, standing a landmark to voyagers on the lake, a post from which the Maori warrior had, in days gone by, watched the coming of hostile canoes from belligerent tribes on the other side of lake. The blue expanse of water that filled the space between the foreground and the distant mountains which gleamed white in the sun, and the blue hills that lay at their foot, all were there: and he had now commenced to reproduce from his 'study' the group of Maoris and their canoe.

When he had been at work an hour or more, who should suddenly look over his shoulder but the chief's daughter—she had stolen noiselessly over the sand, on which the imprint of her bare feet had left marks, beside the track already made by Craig, to the spot where he was working.

'Hullo!' he exclaimed. 'What brings you here?'

'I have come to help you,' answered the Maori girl, with a mischievous smile, her bashfulness of yesterday

changed to a playful self-possession, such as we notice in our acquaintance with children, and characterised by an impulsiveness which charms us with its naive frankness.

'But you can't help me, Hinerau,' he said.

'Oh, yes, I can,' she answered. 'Do you not put me on the paper? Then I *can* help you!' And after a pause she added, 'What do you do it for? Why do you take such trouble to put the lake and the trees and the rocks and skies and the hills on your paper?' And she stood erect, and gracefully waved her arm along the horizon.

'Because I like it,' he answered

'Because you like what?' she asked.

'I must take time to think how to explain to you,' said Craig, and he leant back and clasped his hands behind his head, as is the manner of some men when in thought, and of many women, too, when they wish to be bewitching and have a deep easy chair in which to display their charms. 'Well,' he said after due thought, 'I suppose you will understand me best if I say that I put the lake and the mountains and that crag on the *paper*, as you call it, because I love the sight of them, and like to see them when I have gone away'

'You put them on the paper because you love them,' she mused. 'Then why do you put me on the paper? Because you love me?'

'Not exactly that,' he answered, laughing. 'I put you and your father and the others there, because you make the picture more lovely.'

Hinerau's face fell. However, leaning over him, she watched the picture, as it progressed under the hand of the painter; her eyes intently following each stroke of the brush ; her face close beside his ; her breath fanning his cheek, and her hand lying lightly upon his shoulder. Then, suddenly, with an impatient gesture, she seated herself at his feet and looked up into his face and said :—

'You would forget what you love without the picture, if you went away? I do not forget my home when I am away. And I do not forget you when I cannot see you. I saw you all through the night, when I slept and when I was awake.'

'H'm,' murmured Craig to himself. And then he said somewhat sharply, 'Hinerau ! if your father saw you here with me, he would be angry. You had better go.

'No, he would not be,' she said, looking into his face ; a troubled expression playing over her countenance, as though she were perplexed at his odd way of perceiving things. 'Oh, no. He calls you *rangatira*, great, well-born, and he would not be angry to see me here with you. He would be glad. He honours you.' And she gently raised her hand and placed it in the angle of his arm.

And go she did not, but sat still at his feet without speaking any more. And Craig thought as she sat in that position that he might as well utilise the opportunity of securing so fine a model, and he made a 'study' of her head. At length, when he rose, she rose, too, and followed him, even asking leave to carry his

easel to the township, a request he did not grant; but she secured his colours and carried them instead. There was something pathetic as well as child-like in the inutility of the action.

Craig went away from that district shortly after this, because, wherever he wandered to sketch, or wherever he might be in the township, there the Maori girl followed him, her great pathetic eyes full of hopeless grief, and her tongue speechless—for he thought it expedient to take no great notice of her, subsequently. So beautiful and so strangely simple a companion spoilt him for his work and diverted his mind from his art to other things, and as he deeply respected this maiden of ideas so uncivilized and yet so charming, whose notions of the relationship of the sexes were so crude, and who was so impulsive and uncalculating in regard to the passion called love, therefore he went away.

But six months found him back again. Whether it was that he had got the better of the scruples of his conscience, having stamped upon that troublesome sprite who never leaves us, though we bid him begone—but stands at our elbow boldly confronting the contending evil spirit of temptation that hails from Erebus, and shouts his opinions and counterclaims to our attention in his thin, piping voice, which sounds so insignificantly and yet is always so plainly heard; whether it was Craig found the attractive thought of again seeing Hinerau irresistible, or whether his mistress Art pointed her finger and guided him again once more to that beautiful region, is a thing that he never disclosed. It is sufficient

for our purpose to confine ourselves to narrative, leaving the machinery that works out the actions of men, undisturbed in the hands of the deity who presides over destiny, but does not always explain to simple men the methods of his working.

On the evening after Craig's second arrival, Hinerau appeared walking down the main street, the only street of the township : she was unattended and came suddenly upon him, as he stood smoking on a verandah, enjoying the cool of the evening.

'Ah ! You *are* here,' she exclaimed excitedly by way of greeting. 'They told me you were here. And I came to look for you, and I have found you. I feared they might have been mistaken, or spoke intending to deceive me, but they spoke true and kind words, and ah, I have found you !' And she took his hand in her passionate grasp.

Craig gazed calmly at the pretty, smiling face of the girl, whose cheeks were lit up with the carmine blush that betrayed her excitement and pleasure; and her eyes were beaming with joy. He stood collectedly gazing at her for some time without uttering a word, and she, observing that he was displeased with her for the action she had taken, bent her head and drew back rebuffed. And, without saying one word to her, he turned and left her where she stood. Hinerau watched him till he had disappeared, and then she slunk away as if she had been whipped.

However, she did not quit the township. For days, though she never again addressed Craig, she followed

him at a distance whenever he went abroad, or stood watching for him to leave his abode, looking, the while, the picture of misery and despair. Late, one afternoon, however, he went out, to find she was not as usual watching guard over him, and walked down to the margin of the lake and sauntered along the shore. As he was casting pebbles into the water, lo! Hinerau came suddenly upon him from the 'manuka' scrub that there bordered the lake. She did not speak, but threw herself on the pebbles at his feet,

'Hinerau, get up!' exclaimed Craig 'Why do you lie there?

'No, no,' sobbed the Maori girl, 'I will not get up. I have offended you; I have done something wrong; and you are angry with me, and I know not what it is.

'I am not angry with you,' he said, putting his hand on her head, 'your only fault is one that you do not understand. Come! do not kneel on those stones. I am not angry with you. You have done nothing wrong. But what you cannot understand is, that it is not right for you to follow me about and to be always with me. You don't belong to me, or I to you. Come, get up!' And stooping, he took her by the arms and lifted her to her feet.

The dark girl looked him in the face and said :—

'You make a picture of me, because you wish to remember me when you are away; and I go away with your picture in my breast and remember you. I think of you all the day, and dream of you all the night. Then you come back. And you will not suffer me to come

near you, you will not speak one word to Hinerau. You say I do not belong to you. Then I belong to no one. For days I have waited for you to speak me one kind word and give me one kind look, but no! you take no more notice of me than if I were a dog, a pig—and yet you say, I have not angered you. As you say I do not understand, You are a pakeha. I am Maori. Your ways are not my ways. You think with your head, and I think with my heart. You have your own women to comfort you and to love. To you I am a dog, a cow; I am nothing, a pebble.' And she wailed in her anguish of soul.

Craig was touched at the plight she was in. He put his hand on her shoulder, and endeavoured to comfort her. But, he could not or she would not be comforted. The more he said the worse she cried. At length, he left her weeping by the water's side, vowing to himself that she should be sent home.

Meeting near the township an old Maori woman, whom he knew, and whose canoe he sometimes borrowed, he told her all about Hinerau, and asked her to look after the girl for that night, and to keep her from harm.

Pirihira—that was the old woman's name—immediately went down to the lake-side to see after the girl, but she could not find her at the spot where Craig had left her. With a Maori's cunning, she traced the girl's footsteps, which had been turned in the opposite direction from the township, along the soft sand that lay close to the water's edge. The old woman followed them for some half mile, when they disappeared. Pressing inland

through the scrub, Pirihira found herself on the track that led to the little bay where the crag was. Now, the old woman had had experience in love cases, and instead of turning back to the town when she lost the footmarks, she pursued her way towards the bay, and moreover quickened her pace into a run.

The path led nowhere but to the bay where Craig had painted his picture—it stopped there, and Pirihira surmised that she would find Hinerau there.

The sun had gone down, but the moon was up, and as Pirihira came upon the scene of Hinerau's first meeting with Craig, she saw, on the top of the crag, a figure standing out black against the moon-lit sky.

'Hinerau ! Hinerau !' she cried in her shrill, cracked voice. But she was too late—with a splash, the girl had thrown herself into the waters of the lake, e'er the echo of the old woman's voice had died away.

Pirihira lost no time. Running round to the foot of the cliff she peered into the glistening waters. Then she threw off her only garment and plunged after the misguided girl. But Hinerau had sunk—she, like all Maoris, was a good swimmer, but she was drowning herself because of her disappointed passion.

The old woman, when she came to the surface, scanned the waters for a sight of the girl, but no head appeared above the waters. Then she dived again, and again came to the surface for breath. She dived once more, and this time, after a long interval, she came to the surface of the water with her hand in the hair of the half-drowned girl. The would-be suicide drew two or

three deep breaths and then struggled to release herself, but Pirihira was strong, though old—had she not helped to build stockades? had she not carried a gun in the war? was she not, though getting old in years, as strong every whit as a man?—and she dragged Hinerau to the soft beach of the little bay.

When the girl was quite herself, she glared at her preserver with eyes wild like an angry animal's, and hissed between her teeth :—

'What? Do you follow me, witch? May the spirit of your father burn in Hell! **Ka taona to upoko* !'

Pirihira did not answer the girl, but straightway set to work to thrash her. She beat her with her hand all over her naked body; she beat her though the girl screamed imprecations at her; she beat her till she could strike no more, and then she sat down by the side of the now weeping girl to regain her breath.

At length she rose, and went to the crag's foot, fetched her garment, and came back to Hinerau. Then, as the girl lay crouching on the sand, she harangued her in a speech that was pregnant with indignation and not unmingled with scorn. She traced her descent back to her great ancestress Rangi-Uru, and mentioned the name of Tuwharetoa the founder of her tribe, and Tutanekai his son; then she went through all the names of the collateral line of Te Heuheu, and even did not spare her from the list of the descendants of Tawakeheimoa,

* Though a Maori would hardly use such a curse at this, having no clear conception of the nether region, yet the force implied by it is appropriate.

Ngararanui and Tuteaiti, the other sons of Rangi, half brothers of her great ancestor Tutanekai who married Hinemoa. And she called the shades of all these great people to witness the disgraceful conduct of Hinerau. And Hinerau felt her shame, and wept bitterly. Then, when she had made an end of speaking, the old woman, placing a firm hold upon the girl's arm, led her back to the township, where she spent the rest of the night in Pirihira's hut. Next day, her preserver took her back to her tribe on the other side of the lake. Old Tama, when he heard of what had happened, gave his daughter a lecture which was almost a perfect replica of Pirihira's tirade, but that he dwelt more severely upon the folly of what she had done; and then told his wives to watch her, for the future. Hinerau's mother was dead, and her step-mothers, as may be surmised, watched her with great care.

When Craig heard of Hinerau's attempt on her own life, he was for the second time painfully aware of the position in which he found himself. It was to him as though he was responsible for the girl's action; as though he had well-nigh caused her death, when but one kind word, one soft caress from him would have averted the danger. However, when he was told by Pirihira that she had taken the girl safely to her home, he felt that, at anyrate, now, though the past incident might lie at his door, for the future, her father was the responsible person on whom the blame would fall should the spirit of desperation again seize her. He fancied that the old man, now that he knew all, would take

good care to prevent his daughter from seeing him again. He believed that he had seen the last of Hinerau, and he was not distressed at such a thought, for he recognized that he was not the proper person to have care of this passionate creature, whose love seemed to him more that of a beautiful animal than of a fellow being. But he was wrong in his calculations; he had not seen the last of Hinerau. The girl had not remained a week at home, when a young Maori, who had long desired her as his wife, but had always been rejected by her and also by her father, on account of lowness of caste, asked for her again. This time the old chief consented. And Hinerau, though fearing her father yet loved him, and said she would obey him. But on the night, before that which was to have been her bridal night, her good intentions gave way before the passion she felt for the Englishman, and she stole out of the village while all were asleep, and took a horse belonging to the tribe, and braving the terrors of the night, which to her were many and terrible, she rode into the township where Craig was. She entered Pirihira's hut in the grey of the morning, without waking the old woman, and laid herself down softly, and went to sleep.

When Craig heard from Pirihira, next morning, of her return, he was thunderstruck with astonishment.

'They have given her to Tuaraki, who is a low-born Maori,' the old woman said, 'and she says that she is yours, and will not leave you.'

Here was a dilemma. And Craig did his best to face it. He shut himself up in his room, and for many hours

he spent a very bad time with himself, battling the seductive thoughts that came flooding into his brain. Had he not, whispering temptation suggested, done all a man could be expected to do to rid himself of the girl's love? What had he done to provoke such devotion? Nothing : it was spontaneous. Might he not go a short way to meet such affection? Surely, many men would have treated the matter very differently than he had, nor would have respected the moral aspect of the case as he had done? Then, was she not old enough to know her own mind? And surely, what was pure to her might be pure to him, and should be pure to all mankind? Why should there be one marriage law for him and another for her? And then the beauty of her! Was it not more than cruelty and pure folly, to resist her any longer?

To fight against one's passions gives pain, and Craig spent those hours of mental agony, in endeavouring to reason out his difficulty, and in trying to square the circle of his own conscientious scruples. And he entirely failed to do so.

At length his good angel came to his rescue and guided him to look far ahead, and he thought of the likely future of the girl, should she be treated as so many of her own race have been treated by undisciplined white men. He thought of the perhaps eventual degredation of the beautiful girl, of what she might someday become, and then he thought of her present purity and her innocence, and her entire want of wisdom. And the thought saved him.

He went to Pirihira's hut, and interviewed Hinerau. He declared his intention of taking her back to her tribe. She besought him to do no such thing. She would be his slave, she said; she would do his menial work; she would do anything for him; go anywhere with him, if only he would let her remain near him.

Then the struggle came welling up again in his breast: her pretty face was there before him: her lissom form lay stretched at his feet. And what a glorious form it was, how shapely, how good to look at: indeed, how lovely, how lovable she was! But he choked it all down.

He said:—

'Hinerau, you must go home. I will take you back to your father. I will make him promise that no one shall hurt you for running away this time, and make him promise that you need not marry Tuaraki. You must live among your own people, for there only can you be happy.'

Hinerau could not see things in this light. How could she?

'If you take me back, the women will beat me, and the girls will laugh at me and say you scorn me,' she pleaded. 'And Tuaraki, whom I hate, will marry me—I am given to him—and then I shall kill myself.'

However, Craig stood firm to his decision. He asked Pirihira for her canoe and for her two grandsons to act as rowers, and ordering Hinerau to follow him, he led the way to the lake-side. He then told the girl to take her place in the canoe, and she obeyed submissively,

and the two lads took their seats, and last of all, Craig got in and off they started; Hinerau lying at the bottom of the canoe, crying.

They rowed to her village on the opposite side of the broad lake, and when the canoe touched the shore, Craig greeted the group of Maoris gathered together to see who was coming, and asking for the chief, took Hinerau up to his hut. There he met Tama-arangi. 'I have brought you back your daughter,' was Craig's greeting. 'She follows me day and night, but I do not want her as my wife.'

'Hinerau is her father's daughter,' responded Tama-arangi. 'She will possess half my lands. She is rich, and the *pakeha* loves much land.'

'No matter' said Craig, 'I do not want her, neither do I covet your land, Tama-arangi. I leave her with you. Only one thing I ask, and that because I honour her: Do not let her be beaten after I have gone. And do not give her to Tuaraki—she will kill herself if you do.'

'She has never been beaten!' exclaimed the old chief haughtily. 'Tuaraki has gone back to his home. She shall not marry Tuaraki.'

'Then find her some other husband among her own people,' said Craig. 'One who is worthy of her, some man whom she can love—there are such—and then she will soon be content to dwell where he shall choose.' And with that he left the hut, and walked down to the beach, followed by a number of the tribe. But the chief and his daughter remained in the hut. Pirihira's grandsons were still in the canoe, and without delay, Craig

pushed off and directed his course towards home.

Hinerau for some time knelt at her father's feet.

'Child,' said the old chief, 'you have made me to look little in the eyes of the *pakeha*. Your mother will scowl at you from her grave, for the scorn you have brought upon her. The man is great and proud, and you are but a pebble on the beach to him, you are as the earth under his feet, and you have brought shame on the name of Tama-arangi. Stay with me, my child, and I will marry you to a chief among your own people. Hinerau, indeed, are you, a maid among a hundred; but you shall become the mother of a flock, which is better.' He said more, a great deal more, but enough has been given to show that he loved his daughter and felt for her in the rebuff she had received from the Englishman. The girl, when he had finished, suddenly started to her feet, her lithe figure quivering with emotion. Her face had lost all its carmine colour, and had assumed a ghastly grey aspect. Her hands were clenched in agitation, and the twitching of her face showed the struggle that was going on in her mind. She looked a wild thing, half-demented, half-savage. With a despairing look in her eyes, and a sharp piercing cry which told how deep her anguish was, she darted from the hut before her father could prevent her.

The people on the beach were watching the canoe, now a considerable distance from the shore, and did not perceive the girl as she dashed down from the village. Rushing through them, Hinerau sprang into the water, leaving her garment floating on its surface, and struck

out boldly from the land.

The on-lookers raised a shout of surprise. Had the canoes of the tribe not been absent at the township, on the opposite side of the lake, doubtless they would have launched one and have brought back the daring girl to land. But, as it was, two of the young men plunged into the water and pursued her.

Craig, hearing faintly the shout of the people on shore, turned his head, and thinking that something was wrong, ordered the boys to cease paddling, but seeing nothing of those in the water, ordered them to resume their course, slowly.

Hinerau, knowing she was pursued, swam as for very life, and a race commenced, between the pursuers and pursued, worthy of record by Homeric pen.

The young men had all the strength of youth, and swam with a vigour befitting it ; but the girl swam with the strength born of despair and love. She never lost one inch of her advantage over them : on the contrary, she increased it. On, on, each stroke bringing her nearer to the man she loved, the brave girl swam. The young men, feeling that a woman, a girl, was beating them, redoubled their efforts to overtake her.

Craig, as the natives on shore continued to shout encouragement, some to Hinerau, some to those that pursued her, drew up and endeavoured to ascertain what was toward, but failing to see the cause of the excitement, continued his course at a moderate speed.

Half a mile, three quarters, a mile from the shore, and then one of the pursuers gave in and turned back.

On, on, swam the girl; on, on, swam her remaining pursuer, at each stroke straining every muscle of his chest, every fibre of his body ; on, on, until he felt that his remaining strength would but carry him back to the shore, and then with a cry of rage he too relinquished the pursuit. On, on, pressed the girl, wearied but determined ; careless of the prodigal expenditure of her strength, thinking alone of gaining her lover ; regardless altogether of ever again reaching the shore, risking her life in her mad headlong course. Gradually she gained on the canoe, and when within ear-shot, she raised a cry. The cry was faint and feeble, and it only just reached Craig's ear, but he stopped the canoe. However, hearing nothing more and seeing nothing, he again ordered the boys to resume paddling. Hinerau was now so far from the shore that it was impossible for her to reach it again. Suddenly one of Pirihira's boys, turning his head and scanning the surface of the water, noticed the small black speck on the tide. And Craig stopped his course once more. As the black speck drew nearer it was evident that there was someone swimming after them, and Craig surmised that he was being followed, but by whom he knew not, and he straightway put the canoe about. Then the faint cry came again across the waters, and Craig thought of Hinerau. Now the speck was visible on the water's surface, now it could not be seen. Plying stroke on stroke with full force, they drove the canoe back towards the shore. Nearer, nearer to the girl they came. Again, she cried. They answered with a shout. Now they are close upon

her ; they are within reach of her, when lo ! she is gone. Again she comes to the surface, poor, faint, brave girl. her strength all but gone. One moment, and Craig's strong hand is under her arm. He stoops, and grasps her firmly with each hand. Her hand is on the canoe's side, her hair is streaming down her back, and her big brown eyes look pleadingly up into the face of the man for whom she would willingly die. Craig puts forth his whole strength and lifts her bodily out of the water ; the canoe heels over, and the water splashes dangerously over the side : but it rights itself again quickly. And Hinerau is safe. Craig takes off his coat and throws it over the exhausted girl, as she lies in the water at the bottom of the canoe, and then, at the sight of her, he buries his face in his hands, and a great sob breaks from him. He is beaten ; the girl has won.

Hearing his cry of emotion, Hinerau rouses herself. One look, and she sees she has gained the love of him on whom her hopes in life depend. With a painful effort she raises her weary limbs, and drags herself towards him, an expression of ineffable joy upon her ashy face, and clasps him round the neck and draws his face down to hers. His arms are under her in a moment, but the exertion has been too much for her strength, and she falls fainting in his arms.

* * * * * * *

Craig still paints ; and in his studies hang two pictures which he can never be persuaded to part with. One of these is the view lake of the lake, with the group of

Maoris in the foreground, under the cliff. And the other is the portrait of a beautiful Maori girl dressed in a pure white flax robe, and with no tattoo marks on her lower lip.

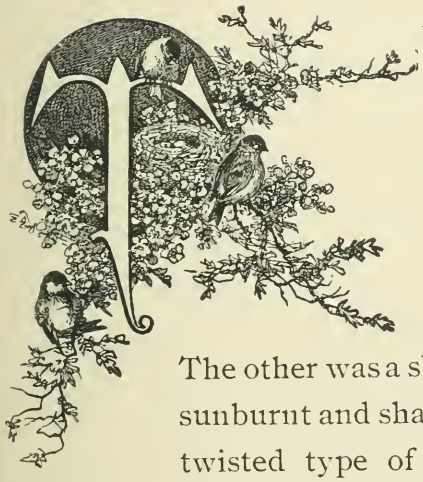
If a visitor to Craig's studio should question him concerning these two pictures, he usually calls in his wife to explain. And she will say :—'The portrait is that of a foolish Maori girl, called Hinerau. She tried to drown herself by jumping from the cliff there into the water, because of an Englishman who did not return her love.' 'And after such a display of mad devotion,' Craig will add, 'what did the fool do but marry her.' 'So you see, there were two foolish people,' Hinerau will say.

But for all that, those foolish people have not yet regretted their folly.

THE PROMISED LAND

The Promised Land.

New Eve's in all her daughters came,
As strong to charm, as weak to err.
Moore.



TWO men were sitting at breakfast in a farm house. One was a tall, heavy, red-headed, red-bearded man, whose features were well-nigh hidden in the abundance of his hair. The other was a short man, round-shouldered, sunburnt and shaven; and his face, a crooked, twisted type of face, wore a look of good humour, perpetually. The men talked, as they ate.

'And though Gawd '*as* given both you and me plenty in abundance, Pannifer, yet there ain't no reason whatever why we should not explore this unknown region, which you have spoken of, to the betterin' of our respective welfares and the encouragin' of our souls?' The red-headed man was talking to his companion.

'There's none whatever,' answered Pannifer, the round-shouldered man.

'Didn't Gawd send 'Is servants to explore the Promise Land of old? And didn't they come back laden with milk and 'oney?'

'So they did, to be sure,' said Pannifer.

'Very well, then, why should not you and me go and explore this 'ere region, as was said by your friend Haggish to abound in gold and precious metals. He 'as been, as you 'ave said, and *he*, accordin' to accounts, did wonder-ously. It's only the faint-'earted as fail; and, the Lord sustainin' us, we shall prosper.'

'Ah! who knows?' said Pannifer.

'Then we'll go! D' you see? We'll be orf tomorrow, and make no delay. Ain't the word been given us?'

During the converse of the two men, a woman had been bustling in and out of the room; busying herself with household matters. She was a fresh-coloured, plump woman, with plenty of spring in her step, a roguish brown eye, and pelutant of mouth.

'Mary!' cried the red-haired man —the woman was his wife and was, at the moment he spoke, from the room. She at once entered, having in her hand a table-knife with which she was paring an onion. 'My dear,' said her husband, turning in his chair to address her, 'put that 'ere knife down, an' come like a Christian woman an' eat along of us. "She that will not eat neither shall she work," which is Scripture, and directly meets the case.' The wife seated herself at the table, and her husband continued, '*Me* and Mister Pannifer intends goin' a journey, my dear, the journey that we've talked of such a deal—not as we each ain't content with

our lot, as it is, but that the Lord seems to be guidin' us to turn our steps in the way which '*E* shall choose.'

'And where might that be?' asked the wife.

'To think that you shouldn't know, an' we talk of it as we did! We're goin' up the Promise Land. You know where that is, surely—back of the ranges. *Who* knows? we might find a gold mine up there. Then Mary, my dear, you shall 'ave a satting dress and all things nice.'

'I'll believe that when I see it,' she answered pertly, looking at Pannifer with a smile.

Throughout the forenoon of that day preparations were made for departure of the two men. Tea, and sugar, and salt, and flour, were packed in neat and conveniently sized bags. Blankets were got out, and were hung in the sunshine to air. Shovels and picks were cleaned; and a large tin dish and an axe were brought, the one from the dairy and the other from the tool-shed. Then the red-haired man discovered that they would require a tent, and he started off to the neighbouring township to procure one, and to make the necessary legal arrangements, while his 'chum' finished the packing.

As the day drew towards noon, Pannifer left his work and joined the woman in the kitchen. Seating himself on the table he began a conversation with her.

'And what might we be going to have for dinner?' he asked in a prefatory manner. It smells good, whatever it is, anyway.'

'Steak and onions, that's what you're going to have,' answered the woman.

'And a very nice dinner, too,' remarked Pannifer.

'Well, I've been wondering if you'll miss us much when we're gone, and whether you'll feel lonely like, Mrs Hamelin.'

'Well, *Mister* Pannifer—since you *do* want to be so polite and proper—let me say I shan't miss some people's prayers and Scripture.' And she gave him a look of mischief which carried its meaning with it.

'It is true, Ben *is* a bit awful at times with his crank notions and everlasting texts' said Pannifer. 'But he can't help himself, so to speak : it's his manner of speech, it's part of his character to carry on so, and give his notions in Scripture language ; he being brought up like that, I believe.'

'Yes, he was brought up at a charity school. In London it was,' interposed Mary.

'Then how can you expect anything else?' continued Pannifer. 'He was probably taught that, if he talked so, he would be sure to be put in a better book than the little beggar who wonld'nt talk as if he was a young palm-singer. And the habit of copying his betters grew upon him, till such manner of talk came quite natural. You must make all due allowance for him.'

'Well, so I do ; but you ain't had five years of it, same as me, or you would'nt talk like that. I'm sick of it. There ! His "If the Lord will," and "If Gawd please," and "The Lord helping us, you shall one day be a rich woman, Mary"—it's all a pack of nonsense. As if *I* don't see through it all, Mr Pannifer.'

'But, my dear,' expostulated he, 'you must own that, in spite of it, Ben's made a good husband. Now, come,

you must own that : and the other charading nonsense, it don't matter.'

'I own nothing of the sort,' said the woman ; standing directly in front of Pannifer, her hands on her hips, and her whole attitude indignant ; 'I own nothing of the sort. He's got together this sect of Particular Daylights : that's true enough. But he has his reasons for it, don't you make any mistake ; him a sitting in the meeting house along of sister Bragg, all afternoon, and a going to see sister Martha Glister about the condition of her soul, and and coming home after twelve at night, worse than any common tippler. I own nothing of the sort : and that I tell you because of the time we used to be friends, before you and me quarrelled, so stupid-like, and I went and married him just to spite you, and you went over to Australia.' The words poured from her mouth in a torrent of excitement.

'I did'nt suspect of Ben that he'd be up to these kind of games,' said Pannifer, contemplatively. 'It seems he's kind of taken you in.' And the speaker swung his legs, as he sat on the table, and blew a long, low whistle, indicative of surprise, through his lips. And then he mused aloud :—'Well, you took him of your own choice, Mary. You could have taken other men, and perhaps done better. I myself had asked you twice. But then I'm not a great strapping, big, fellow, like him, and may-be that made the difference. Even when you seemed so fixed on him, and I went away, feeling I was out of the running, I always hoped you would be happy—though not with me. You'll give me that much credit, I believe.

Then when Haggish died in my company over there, leaving me his secret of The Promised Land, then it seemed to me that, as I would need a mate, Ben would be the man ; and you'd get the benefit of any "find" we might make. I don't profess any great passionate love for Ben ; I never did, I know that—I always thought him queer in his religion, like—but I hadn't any idea he treated you *so*. It's a crying shame, Mary, that a girl like you should be treated as you say *you* are. Such a wife as you would make, if treated honestly and straightforward—ah ! it's a shame.'

Here the woman broke in half apologetically :—'We got on all right for a time. But, when he took to trying to manage my farm—and him brought up in London, and not even knowing a steer from a heifer—and took things clean out of my brother's hands—it was Charlie, as you know, and he had to go—then we quarrelled.' And suddenly her manner changed, and again anger was in every tone. 'Why, he'll scarcely allow me the price of a bit of ribbon, or a piece of stuff to make myself a dress. He can give sister Gummidge new aprons and a black merino, to wear at the meetings, and the other sisters'—the 'sisters' was spoken with infinite contempt—'gets presents all round, whenever they hint at wanting anything : but he can't find enough pence to buy me a new pair of boots, against the wet weather. Oh ! no. I must wash, and cook, and scrub, and be thankful, while he spends his time praying with sister Bragg and enquiring into the state of sister Scroggs's soul. Oh ! if I'd a-guessed how his precious religion was going to

break out, do you think I'd have ever chained myself to him? Not much! And sometimes I sit and think and think and wonder how ever I came to marry him, and whatever it was in him that caught my fancy. Oh, dear!—and, into the bargain, he's gone and muddled matters on the farm, till it's mortgaged to well-nigh all it's worth, and until the very house we live in we can't call our own!'

'Well, Mary, you *are* in a tight place,' said Pannifer, ponderingly. 'But it seems impossible anyone could treat a girl like that—and a girl such as you, too, more particular. Now, you and I, we were friends—just think of it—when Ben was a little nipper, unknown, and God knows where, living in London in a charity institution; so you must not mind if I talk straight to you, as I used to, time back that was. You and I were friends, then. Why should we not be friends now? Why shouldn't we, Mary?' And he put his hand gently on her shoulder. 'Perhaps I'll be able to help you, and pull Ben right. I'll have a good chance of talking to him when we're in camp together, him and me. But, as for the farm—I can't do much there. That will take time and hard work to put it right.'

'It would be very kind and very like you to try, Harry,' she answered, looking at him sweetly, and then hanging her head; her breast heaving with suppressed emotion. 'But what good can *you* do? What could *anyone* do?'

'Well, I might perhaps do this much good: I might teach him to value you more, by telling him how *I* would

have valued you. At any rate, I'll try to put things right between you ; and, someday, I hope to see you leading a happy life.'

She laid her hand on his arm, and looked at him steadfastly in the face.

'It's no good,' she said, 'I can't hope to be happy. Ben, he only married me so get my farm, and when that's gone he won't care how soon I go, too. I married him not knowing what I did, when all the time I was fond of you, kind fellow that you are and always have been ; only I didn't find it out till it was too late. Oh ! you'd have never treated me as he done, that you wouldn't. I may have been flighty and quick-tempered and that, but when I married him I meant to be a good wife—as good as I knew how. And so I have been, 'cept that I *have* quarrelled with him ; but who wouldn't have, when he spent all my money without letting me have a farthing scarcely, and took up with those weak hypocrites of women ? Then I hated him, when I found that out. And I hate him now. I hate his very touch and the very sound of his voice !' And she stamped vehemently with her foot, and clenched her hands in anger.

'There, there, now,' said Pannifer, kindly taking her hand in his. 'I'll try if I can't put it all right : you see if I don't. You're not quite happy now, but you will be. Things 'll come round all right, I dare say.'

Then she placed her head on his shoulder, as she had often done in days that had long gone by—and the action was accompanied by no signs of embarrassment, as might have been expected—and she looked again into his face

'I *am* happy,' she said, 'while I'm with you. You are the only true friend I ever had, and if Ben chooses to carry on with those other women, there's no harm, that I can see, in my just telling you that I *am* fond of you, Harry. I always was, long ago; though I didn't know it. And I treated you badly, I did. And it's very good and very kind and forgiving you've been to me.' And she wept, pillowing her face on his shoulder.

When she had dried her tears, she looked up again, and smiled into his face. 'Yes,' she said, 'we are friends once again. I don't deserve even a kind word from you, yet you've given me many—but have you really forgiven me for being so hard, so like a block of stone, when I was so cold and you were so tender and so kind? Oh! what a fool I was.'

'I've long ago forgiven and forgotten everything,' he answered. 'You had every right to marry who you liked.'

'Ah! you kind fellow. You indeed forgive me; but, to prove it, kiss me.'

He kissed her.

'There!' she said. 'My heart's been wicked and full of hate, but I'm not a really bad woman. You have kissed back hope into my life, and kissed my hatred away. I hate nobody now, not even those hypocrites of women. Ah, how good it is to be loved, all for one's own self. Yes, you and I can love one another—as friends, but that's all. Remember, Harry.'

'Yes, I'll remember,' he said.

'Then let us make it a bargain' she said. And, placing

her hands, one on each of his shoulders, she sealed this strange compact of platonic love with a kiss. One kiss led to another, and the joy of the woman's heart overflowed in soft purring, cooing sounds, that explained her love more truly than her words.

Suddenly, with a quick, movemont he pushed her from him, and stood away from her, and spoke. 'No, he said, 'this sort of friendship doesn't last. It's too good to last: and the upshot of it, instead of bringing joy to you, would only bring you sorrow and, perhaps, misery. And I have been a mean, miserable, weak fool not to see it. I've been a fool to let you wheedle me so! I've been a fool to let the old feeling for you come back! Thank God, I'm going away to-morrow, and shall be out of your reach. For the temptation of you is more than I can bear.'

And the shapely, healthy-complexioned woman, her body poised in an attitude that told of vigour of limb and abundance of health and strength, smiled her roguish smile; and her cheeks blushed red, and her cherry-lipped mouth puckered bewitchingly, as she smiled. And she said, 'Yes, yes, but we've made our bargain, remember. And don't you break it, one way or the other, mind. You are my friend and I am yours. Nothing can undo that. We are the best of friends.' And, as he walked quickly from the room, she laughed a merry little laugh. The woman was happy.

And, just then, a dog poked his head in at the door, and trotted up to Mary Hamelin, and, wagging his tail, placed his nose in her down-stretched hand. And soon

the dog was followed by his red-bearded master, who had returned home.

CHAPTER II.

When I was at home I was in a better place; but travellers must be content.—*As You Like It.*

EXT morning, early, the two men started; the bulk of their goods strapped to a pack-horse. The dog, a mongrel collie, went with them; and Mary Hamelin stood at the door to watch them go, and waved her hand as they journeyed out of sight.

The first day of their travels was uneventful, and evening found them encamped at the foot of the track leading to that place which we will call the Promised Land. But, it may be asked, how was it that the sanctimonious Benjamin, who, in keeping with his role, professed to eschew walking with the ungodly, came to be in the company of Pannifer, who professed religion of no kind, but used strong language on occasions, and was wont to laugh at such as Hamelin for their religious phrases and quotations from Scripture?

The answer, if it has not dawned upon the reader, may be found in the fact that Pannifer was an experienced digger of gold, and possessed valuable knowledge imparted to him by his defunct 'chum,' John Haggish, of a rich 'claim' on the Promised Land, known to none other; and because Hamelin was a man greedy to become rich, and one who loved money for what it could get him.

And Pannifer's motive in choosing Benjamin? Perhaps it was, as he had stated, to benefit Mary, his old sweetheart. Perhaps it was not.

They slept, that first night, at the foot of the ranges; and early next morning they 'struck' camp and began ascending the track to the Promised Land. It was a track cut out of the sides of mountains covered with dense forests, and had a gradual ascent to an altitude of some four thousand feet, when it led on to a plateau among the mountains.

It was the spring of the year. The air was fresh; the sky was clear blue; the birds sang in the forest through which the travellers passed; and the roaring torrents of crystal-clear water poured laughingly down the mountain sides, at almost every angle of the track.

At midday, they came upon a flat 'clearing,' and here they halted to partake of food. Then, on again through the dense forest they went; their path always leading upward, and allowing of, now and again, a glimpse of the blue sky overhead, or of a rapid river below them; their view, otherwise, being confined to the dark vistas of the track, until at last, in the evening, the trees became

shorter and the forest more penetrable, and, suddenly, they came upon the first slopes of the Promised Land.

A peculiar picture was before them. Gnarled trees, stunted, and covered with a strange hanging lichen ; isolated tufts of coarse, rank grass ; deep pools of dark brown water ; mountains on the right and left, some of them crowned with a thin sprinkling of snow ; a half-ruined hut of clay ; and swamps, across which wound a 'corduroy' track— these were the chief features of the scene.

'Lord ! this gives me a kind of gruesome feelin', which creeps up the spine, 'Enry,' remarked Hamelin, as they halted and scanned the view in front of them.

'Yes, it's a queer place, that's true.' answered Pannifer. 'It seems a place intended for uncanny creatures to live in, beings that have been banished from decent men, doesn't it ?'

'It do, indeed. It reminds me of some pictures I once saw as a little chap in London, in a public gallery. They were drawed by some great *h*artist or other, and represented the Infernal Regions. He'd got all these trees, just like, with all that hanging stuff on them. Ugh ! they ain't proper trees at all, they ain't. And he'd got that there mist, too, on the hills, and them swamps. And those pools of black water, he'd got them, too. Lord ! we're in a perfect 'ole of a place, 'Enry It makes me feel queer, it does, indeed.'

'Haggish gave me to understand it was not the sort of place to picnic in,' said Pannifer. 'And we mustn't

mind that, he said. It had other advantages. He must have built that hut, I expect; and that corduroy track, too. He said he built such a track somewhere up here. This must be the spot where he first started digging, and those dark pools of water are where his first workings were.'

'An' he come up here alone, all along of himself, did he?' asked Benjamin Hamelin.

'Him and his little dog,' laconically answered Pannifer.

'Well, he were a plucky sort of chap. I wouldn't ha' done it. There ain't much promise about this 'ere place, if this is the Promise Land.'

'We're not going to stay just here. We've to follow the corduroy till we come out on to an open kind of plain. But come, Ben, you've got a clear conscience, surely!'

'Well, I'm 'oping so, 'Enry,' answered Ben.

'Then why do you get struck frightened, and that by a bit of scenery, too?' retorted Pannifer.

'My conscience is quite clear, I thank the Lord, Mister Pannifer, through my sins bein' all blotted out. Not that I haven't often fallen, my dear friend, which I 'ave most grievous, as Gawd alone knows. And, indeed, I ought *not* to 'ave strange feelin's in being in this place. But it seems to me a place where bad deeds is done; where men might die, shut up here among the everlastin' 'ills, and no one any the wiser. I don't like the looks of the place. There! That's candid!'

'Well, if it isn't your conscience, Ben, then it must be because you were born and bred in London, like that

little chap who when he saw a real, live tree, for the first time, he thought it was some awful animal, and ran away, frightened. But you'll get accustomed to it, don't you never fear, my friend.'

As they had stood, talking, the mist had come down, and was now rolling in dense masses towards them.

'Lord! and here's the fog comin' down on us, 'Enry: a dank, cold fog, full of chills and rheumatics, it is,' cried the red man. 'What had we best do, now, friend?'

'Camp,' said Pannifer, simply, and he led on the pack-horse.

As they reached the dismantled hut, the mist enveloped them completely in its folds. Soon, Pannifer had spread the 'tent-fly' over the crumbling mud walls, and thus furnished the hovel with a roof: then he made a fire in the half-ruined fire-place, and set to work to cook some food. He told Benjamin to be thankful for the comfortable night he was going to have, and to fling out the rotting bedding and make his bed in the wooden bunk against the wall. This Hamelin did, and lying thereon, declared himself extremely uncomfortable by reason of the hardness of his couch: before long, the warmth of his body had added another discomfort to his misery, and he soon was wriggling and squirming on his blankets, like a newly-caught eel.

'This place is full of fleas, 'Enry,' he exclaimed.

'You didn't expect anything else, did you?' replied Pannifer. 'Be thankful, man, that it's as good as it is. The men who tend the sheep in Gavison's Valley make this hut their halting-place.'

When the cooking was done, they drew some bundles to the fire and sat down to eat. Fried chops, and bread which they had brought with them, strong black tea served without milk in new, bright, tin pannikins—such was their repast. And, when it was finished, Pannifer took out his pipe to add to his contentment.

'Now, Ben,' he said, 'pass my 'baccy tin.'

'I pass it, 'Enry, but I do so with reluctance and unwilling,' said Ben. ''Ow you can persevere in that disgustin' 'abit, I *cannot* understand.'

Pannifer opened the square tin, packed full with sticks of black tobacco, which Hamelin had handed him. 'You see,' he said, 'I like to keep it moist. That tin is just handy-shaped, isn't it? But, look here, Ben, did you ever try to smoke? 'Cause, if you didn't, you don't know anything about it; and as for it being dirty and all that, I guess you're not so awfully clean that smoking a pipe would make any great difference in *you*. It's not half so dirty as messing about, doctoring sheep's feet, as you do—though you don't do them much good, I expect.'

'Maybe,' said Ben, 'maybe not; but in messin' with sheep, one is doin' a Christian service to pore dumb creatures. In smokin' your pipe you ain't doin' nobody good, but only makin' a stench.' Here Benjamin scored.

Pannifer did not answer the argument, but continued cutting up his tobacco, so Benjamin went on :—'If Gawd had meant you an' me to smoke tobaccer, He'd 'ave put it in 'Is blessed Book, 'Enry. As 'E did *not* do so, therefore there is no doubt whatever that you are wrong an' *Hi* am right in this matter; not that I wish in

anyway to stand towards you reproachful, but because I am propelled, 'Enry, to rigister my disapproval of the 'abit.'

When Pannifer had filled his pipe, he delivered himself thus :—'Look here, Benjamin Hamlin, you know quite well that all this sanctimonious religion of yours is humbug. And I know it, too. Why, then, don't you drop it while you are up here? Be a natural chap, if it's only for a while. It would be so much less bother. You know what you put it all on for, down below; but up here you won't gain anything by it. There are no women here.'

'Mister Pannifer,' said the hairy man, 'you may be meanin' somethin', or you may not—I don't know what you mean. But if you think I wear my religion like a cloak, to be put orf and to be put on as occasion suits, you are much mistook in me. What I learnt at my pore dear mother's knee, I ain't goin' to be ashamed of, not before all the world.'

'Now, there you are again,' said Pannifer. 'You know that is humbug, too. You never had a mother, to your knowledge—at least, that is what you told me, once upon a time. And if you had, you know that she never said a prayer or sang a hymn in her life. Most likely she was anything but what she should have been.'

'Well, Mister Pannifer,' answered the Londoner, 'if my pore, dear, defunc' mother was *not* all a woman should be, there ain't no reason why you should rise up and 'urt my feelin's by alludin' to the fact. "'*Oo* made you a ruler an' a judge over *me*?" as the blessed

Apostle said. A mother's memory should be 'eld sacred, 'Enry Pannifer, and unprofaned by such lips as yours, as spends '*arf* their time in blasphemy and bad langwidge.'

'Perhaps I do swear a bit too often, I grant that; but if it would be profane for me to speak of your mother, of course I must leave better names than her's alone. So I do, do you see? Now I haven't any doubt but what you've sworn just as hot as I do, but you did it not so open as me. And yet, when it suits you, no names are too holy for you to use. How do you explain that?'

'Mister Pannifer, my sins bein' all wiped away—'

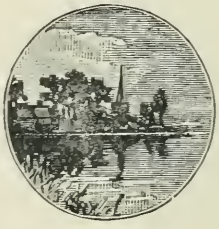
'Oh, stow that, Hamelin! You know as well as I do that you are as big a blackguard as need be. Stow it, I say! We will drop the whole subject, that's the best way of settling the matter.' And he got up and walked out of the hut, taking the axe with him.

He came back in about half an hour with his arms full of black birch twigs, and laid his bundle down in the middle of the hut. Then he went out and got more, and still more, and more still, until the hut seemed full up to the 'tent-fly' with green stuff. Then he filled the bunk with bedding, and got the tent and spread it over the rest of the green stuff on the floor of the hut; took off his coat and boots, and lay down, smoking his pipe and gazing into the fire in silence. Benjamin then made his bed in the bunk and rolled himself up in his blankets. After lying there, speechless, for some time, he said; 'These fleas is goin' to take their supper orf me, 'Enry, that's certain, and their breakfast, too, what's more. They're hungry fleas, these is, and if there is anything

left of me, they'll take their lunch orf me to-morrer too. You'll only 'ave the remnants to take 'ome to my dear wife, I'm very much afraid.'

'I'll tell her you died game, like the noble fellow you are,' answered Pannifer. 'They only crawl, with me, and don't bite. I'm too sour, I suppose; perhaps the tobacco has got into my system. If so, there are some advantages in smoking, after all.'

Then the fire died down gradually, and Pannifer fell asleep and snored loud and happily: and the collie, who had eaten the remains of the men's supper outside, came in and lay down by the warm hearth, and spent the night in short fitful spells of sleep and vigorous attacks upon the vermin that had settled in various parts of his coat. But Hamelin passed a most miserable night, and scarcely got the sleep he much needed after his hard day's climb to the Promised Land.



CHAPTER III.

Gold! gold! gold! gold!
Bright and yellow, hard and cold.
Hood.

ON the following day, passing from their temporary camp, the two men journeyed through a stunted forest, growing in mud that was two feet deep, the branches of the trees crooked and gnarled, the slough green and yellow; and so came to an open plain among the mountains. This was the Promised Land itself.

To the north rose a lofty mountain, its summit divided into two peaks tipped with snow, its precipitous sides, which stood up like a bare grey wall, found their common base in dark forests that straggled on to the plateau. To the south was a little wooded gully, on the further side of which spread rolling downs that ended in bare, round mountains, ten miles away. The travellers had come up from the west, and nothing was to be seen, in that direction, above the tops of the trees they had left behind. To the east the plateau spread out like a fan,

and then suddenly ended abruptly in a belt of forest. This forest fringed a precipice that was abysmal in depth—its limestone rocks piled, as though by giants, one upon the other from base to summit, were covered with green lichen and moss—and fell into a valley which it suddenly blocked up. A strange, dreadful country, and one ominous of evil to a susceptible mind, such as was Hamelin's.

The men directed their steps towards the gully, to the south of the fan-shaped plateau. Here they found a stream of pure bright water, bubbling out of the limestone rocks, another hut with an abundance of fire-wood stacked by it, and Haggish's 'claim.'

Arriving at the scene, Benjamin said, 'No more shanties for me, 'Enry, but clean, uninfected tents, such has the Children of Hisrael might have lodged in, in the desert, to remind us that we 'ave no abidin' city 'ere—which is above.'

'It being, in fact, below,' added Pannifer, as a matter of course.

But Hamelin's inquisitiveness induced him to follow the scoffer into the hut. Inside, a few rags lay about, and a rusted 'billy,' and a large 'pan' with a hole in it, were on the clay floor, underneath the bunk, poked away there by the hand of their dead owner, that they should not encumber the scanty space, and forgotten by him when he left his dwelling to go to other 'fields.' One of the joists of the roof had fallen to the floor, and the blue sky could be seen through holes in the brush-wood thatch.

Leaving the hut, they passed a little lower down the gully, and pitched camp beside the rivulet. Then they went to inspect the 'working' which Haggish had recommended to his friend as worth attention.

'Now he told me,' said Pannifer, as he stood by the side of the 'claim,' 'that if we continued his work, by taking out wash-dirt on the east side—that's that side there'—and he pointed to the side opposite to which he stood, 'we ought to do well. And he said that though the whole slope is gold-bearing at a depth of three to six feet—I expect we'll see his 'sinkings' if we look for them—he recommended us to stick to this part of the ground. Yes, look there!' and he pointed to a line of slate-coloured loam in the side of the 'working,' 'that's the stuff that has the gold in it.'

That afternoon they sampled the 'claim' and washed out a little of the loam in the 'pan,' and the quantity of gold obtained, though small, was in good proportion to the earth washed, and was in small flakes. But, next day they went to work in earnest, collecting the 'wash-dirt' into heaps; and towards evening they found a couple of nuggets.

''*Oo*'s to say,' ejaculated Benjamin upon the discovery of these, 'but what we may come across a reel big 'un, a whopper? Then, my dear friend, we are prac-tic-ally made men. But not a word, mind; not the least sign, given by such-like as flash expenditure or spreeing about, when you goes down to town. The outside world must be kep' in utter darkness, 'Enry: and when we 'ave took all we want—that is, all there is—then we'll divulge, and

then there'll be weepin' and gnashin' of teeth. You and me, we'll retire, that's what we'll do, and live on our means, like bloomin' gents; Gawd bein' good to us. "As for the earth, out of hit come bread and it 'ath dust of gold." And again, 'Enry, "The name of the first is Pison, that is it," '—and he stretched his hand towards the surrounding hills, believing sincerely that Pison was a range of mountains,—'"which compasseth the 'ole land of 'Avilah, where there is gold." Indeed, 'Enry, that is a glorious name, given to the land of which it is said, "Yea, the Lord shall give us that which is good, an' the land shall yield 'er increase." If we thank 'Im with an unfeigned 'eart 'Enry, 'E will bless us abundantly, and prosper our goin' hout and our comin' hin, and we shall find rest unto our souls.'

Responded Pannifer, 'Yes, it's very well you quoting Scripture, Hamelin, but it wastes time. It would be better to take your shovel and set to, again, and keep your eloquence till you've got to the end of the piece.' And he went on washing with the 'pan.' The result of his labour was a pretty little sediment of golden grains at the bottom of the receptacle.

'Yes,' he said, 'we'll go through it, first collecting what gold we can see, till we've taken out all the dirt we have in view, and then we'll wash up and get out the fine gold. And if we don't make a pretty penny out of it, I'm not called Pannifer, you psalm-singing son of a blasted cockney.'

'You may say what you please of me, 'Enry, and use such terms towards me as you think fit, and I shall not

murmur nor complain, bein' what I perfess to be ; but I'd be obliged to you to leave my pore dead father to lie quiet in 'is grave. Not that I'm proud, or feel angered and despiteful. For me it don't matter, because "Riches and honour are with me : yea, durable riches an' righteousness." And, again, "The riches of righteousness, and the honour of the Saints," that tex' applies to *me* an' it don't matter what remarks you may direct hat *me*, them words ringin' ever in my years. But I must ask you to let my pore father alone, him bein' a Scotchman, and you therefore mistook. The name I bear, my friend, I take from my mother, as was of furrin' extraction as the name might tell you were you learn'd ; but bein' what you are, I ain't surprised at nothin'.'

'Take up your shovel and dig,' said Pannifer, briefly. And conversation was not resumed for a while : and consequently, the work they had in hand was benefited.

When they had worked during the better part of a week, they came upon several nuggets of about the same size as walnuts. And after that the wholesale washing of 'dirt' began ; but it was a long and tedious process, by reason of the fact that they had as yet but the 'pan' to do it with. However, the result was a quantity of fine gold, and a fair proportion of nuggets.

The ground on which they were working was on the lower slopes of the downs that rose gradually to the mountains on the south. These mountains had been washed bare, ages back, and the soil had been deposited in a vast alluvial accumulation upon the slope that the diggers were working. And this draining process still

continued, and did not generally assume the form of streams or rivulets, but the water percolated through the loose soil, or ran down in small runnels of water, and so swelled the water in the gully which ran at the foot of the slope. So that wherever 'workings' were made, water fast accumulated, and there was no insufficiency of means to wash the gold-bearing earth by a more expeditious method than that of a 'pan,' but at this first stage of their labour they hesitated to make 'sluice boxes' or a 'cradle' until they had more thoroughly tested the character of the ground. But such returns as they had received set at rest all doubt as to the richness of the 'claim.'

'Why did Haggish go for to abandon this place for Australia, mate? What better promise could 'e 'ave 'ad than this 'ere? Surely, it were flyin' in the face of a kind Providence to turn 'is back upon this 'ere diggins and go away to seek new?' The religious phrase in this last question will indicate that Hamelin was the inquirer.

'And that same's a mystery,' said Pannifer. 'He told me it was about the rush at Burralong, and it's true I met him there, but never a pick did he put in the ground, or turn up a grain of gold. He'd stand by, watching the other men work, talking to 'em about this and that, and, maybe, by-and-by he'd visit them in their huts or tents when he'd become more acquaint. After a bit, I dropped to it. T'was his wife he was after. It would seem that there was a story attached to her—what, I don't know. But be that as it may, she had run away,

when he was working up here and she was living down in the valley, same as your wife might be. One day he went down to get more food and give her a look up, and found her gone. She had cleared out with a fellow called Long Azarias, and gone to Burralong. And that was why he went over there, to find her. He seemed to think of nothing but how he would claim her and then reform her. Rum! weren't it? And when I asked him how he was going to induce her to follow him lovingly, he took out of his pocket a huge roll of five and ten pound notes—long-tail'd 'uns, every one of them. "That's what will please her eyes, and win her heart again," he said. "And there's plenty more where those came from," he said. "Where I got those I can get more; but what use is it all to me without her."

'Well, he never found her after all, though whether she was on those diggings or not I don't know. And he took ill of rheumatic fever, and sort of never had the heart to rally. And one night when he was awful bad, he told me he believed he never would find his wife, for he believed he would never get well. So he told me where it was he had made his pile, and advised me to leave, straight, and work his old claim. Well, he died one night quite sudden, just as I was beginning to think he seemed a lot better. And I buried him decently, and then read his will which he had handed to me. I was sole executor, and his money was all left to his wife, and to me his secret. I straight away advertised that a large sum of money awaited Anita, the relict of the late John Haggish; and before three days were gone by she

appeared to claim it. I gave it to her, and with it just a few of the things I thought of her——and she burst out laughing, and wanted to shove a ten pound note into my fist. And then I came over here, as fast as I could, and here we are at Haggish's claim. And a true friend he was to me when he told me of it.'

'And you, 'Enry, was more than a friend to me when you took me into your confidence,' said Benjamin, holding out his great red hand and placing it affectionately upon Pannifer's shoulder. 'You was a brother. And a brother's part I 'ope to act to you.'

He shortly had an opportunity of showing how far he intended to fulfil this declaration, for Pannifer fell ill of rheumatism—the digger's deadliest enemy—brought on by standing in the water all day: and he was forced to abide in the tent many days. During that time Ben worked in the 'claim' by himself, and Pannifer ruminated, and devised plans for the future, when his pains had not got hold upon him.

One day he said to Ben, when that worthy fellow had finished his morning's work, 'It would be as well for you to go up to Haggish's hut and see if you can find any tin or wire lying about, or it might be zinc, fit to use in a cradle, for that's the thing we want, to keep me from this cursed rheumatism.'

'As you wish, mate,' answered Ben.

'And, I say, you've been digging on the west side of the claim, eh?' asked Pannifer.

'Aye,' said Ben.

'That's right,' remarked Pannifer, 'you go on digging

there, picking out what gold you can see—though there is not much on that side, I'm thinking. But who can tell? You might come on a patch while least expecting. The whole ground is rich in gold, and there's small doubt that by the power of——'

'By the gracious power of the Lord,' put in Ben.

'Just so,' conceded Pannifer;—'We shall get it.'

'We will 'ope so, mate,' said Benjamin; and then he set about eating the dinner of fried bacon and 'damper' and strong tea that Pannifer had with much pain prepared, for his bones were full of aching pains and complained at every movement they were subjected to. When the meal was over, Hamelin again went to work; Pannifer lying in the tent and watching his mate in the 'claim' some three hundred yards away, and dividing his attention between that religious person and the dog that was lying by him in the cool shade of the tent.

Ben worked on, and though a novice, he had eyes enough to see the yellow of the gold he found, and cunning enough to make no sign of excitement when he detected it. Quietly and without exhibiting his intentions by his manner, he picked out any bits of gold he saw, and put a few of them into the leather pouch by his side, and the rest—the larger portion—he put into his breeches' pocket, humming a hymn tune the while. He worked on steadily, collecting the 'wash-dirt,' and continuing to increase the store in his breeches' pocket; while his pouch did not get much weightier.

'Lord! what a rush there'd be, if this 'ere field was knowed of,' he said to himself. 'When Shepherd

Gavison cut that track up to this 'ere place, in order to graze his bullocks and fatten 'is sheep over there in Gavison's Valley to the South somewhere, what little 'e thought of nuggits of gold being underneath 'is very feet as 'e walked over the ground. And 'ere are we reapin' the benefit of 'is ignorance. Why, we're made men, the two on us: that's what we are! No more chapels for me; no more psalms; no more dirty cattle, or ploughin' for me; no more philanderin' round ole wimmen, and drinkin' their tea; no more darned nonsense, but a reel good fling, good wittals, good drinks; in fact, a reel good time!' And he paused, and leaned upon his shovel to contemplate the rosy prospects of the future. And by the smile on his face his thoughts seemed to give him infinite satisfaction.

Then he resumed his work again, with a vigour born of expectation. Suddenly his shovel revealed such a sight as made him drop his implement and fall upon his knees in excitement.

''Ullo!' he cried, 'What in all Creation are yer givin' us now? 'Ere, I say, what *'ave* we got 'ere? Why it's a nest of 'em, a bloomin' young colony of the yellow chaps! And by the power of Habakkuk, 'ere's the mother on 'em all settin' in the middle a-nussin' of 'em.' And he picked up a fine nugget and put it into his pocket. Then he placed two smaller ones in his pouch, and the rest before long reposed in his baggy breeches' pocket.

''Oo says this side of the claim is poorest?' he continued to himself. 'Why Pannifer does, and Haggish

does—and they ought to know. And Benjamin 'Amelin says so too—but, of course, 'e don't know much, don't Benjamin. 'E ain't much of a digger, ain't Ben. 'E 'ardly saw any 'colour' all along this side. 'E digged and 'e digged, all morning, and 'e digged and 'e digged, all afternoon, and 'e only found two or three little bits of gold, that's all. 'E ain't no digger, ain't Benjamin 'Amelin; but 'e piled up the wash-dirt ready to wash, and 'e didn't let on about his breeches' pocket. There, that's the secret of a prosperous life—reticence! That's where you 'ave it. Oh, my paternal progenitor, won't I 'ave times, that's all! Oh, my consecrated soul an' body! won't I 'ave a reel good fling, good wittals, good drinks, good company; in fact, a reel good time, Yes, that's what I *will* 'ave!'

The 'find' was too much for him, and he was forced to take a slight 'spell.' So he picked up his shovel from where it lay in the water, and placed it elegantly against the side of the 'claim,' as a good workman should, and sauntered towards the tent.

'Well, Ben, what luck?' asked Pannnifer.

'Oh, pretty fair,' answered Hamelin. 'Ere you are. See for yerself.' And he handed his mate his pouch, wherein lay a few little pieces of gold. 'There ain't much to be seen, but the washin' will render somethin', I don't doubt. Give us a drink of tea, mate, I'm awful thirsty.'

'Well,' said Pannifer, as he examined the gold in the pouch, 'it's not so bad; we'll see, as you say, what the washing *will* give. Nice bits of gold they are, though.'

And he stiffly reached across, and handed Ben the black 'billy,' soot-begrimed as to its exterior, and stained brown inside through strong tea standing long in it.

After Ben had drunk his fill, he went up to Haggish's hut to look for the material that Pannifer wanted. There were some rusty coils of wire, one of fine, the other of coarse, hanging on a nail inside the hut. But, he never noticed these, till he had lifted up one of the hearth-stones, and had hollowed out a hole beneath it, and placed therein the nuggets which he had secreted in his pocket. Then he carefully replaced the stone, and stamped the freshly exposed mould into the floor.

'There, my beauties,' he said. 'You'll stay there till you're called for, I 'ave no doubt.' And then he glanced round the hut, and his eyes fell on the wire. 'And there's some wire,' he said, 'the very thing that's wanted. What an obligin' old cove that 'ere Haggish must 'ave been, to be sure, to leave us a goal-mind and all the appurtinances thereof.' And lifting down a coil from the place where it had rested for years, he left the hut.

During the next few days, while Pannifer was recovering from his rheumatism, that little store of Ben's beneath the hearth-stone grew and grew. When Pannifer, being recovered, took a journey to town to get provisions, Ben's hoard grew in a wonderful manner; but when the 'cradle' was in full swing, it stopped growing, for Pannifer was by, then, to superintend the finding of the gold. Still, Hamelin had secreted a large quantity of the precious metal—some ninety ounces.

The first washing of the 'cradle' bore good results in flaky gold and small nuggets, and this, indeed, was inspiriting to the diggers, especially to Benjamin, who reckoning, as his, half of the gold that Pannifer kept in the tent, came to the conclusion that this with his private hoard amounted to a considerable sum.

To Pannifer the results, as he had seen them, were as good as he had expected them to be; and he never dreamed of his mate systematically secreting gold, as Hamelin had done.

One Sunday, however, Pannifer went rummaging about Haggish's hut, in the way that a man investigates a spot with interesting memories pervading it—Benjamin was sleeping in the tent, resting after a genuinely hard week's work, or, no doubt, he would have accompanied his mate—and Henry talked to himself as he turned over the mouldering effects that the old digger had left behind in his hurry to follow his erring young wife.

'Yes,' he said, as he sat in what was left of the framework of Haggish's couch, toying with a broken three-pronged fork he had picked up from the floor, 'old Jack must have lived in this place the best part of three years. He stayed up through the winter, once, I remember him saying. He would stack his firewood all around the hut, and when the snow came down and covered everything, he'd make a blazing fire in the hearth there, and the flames would roar up the chimney, and he would sit, and read, and smoke, and pet his little dog, and be warm and happy. But, in his circumstances, I should have preferred other company to a dog's. I should have

married some woman, ready to come up with me here. Ah ! but there it is. What woman would come and live in a wilderness like this ? I know who I'd like, and perhaps she would have come. But there, that's enough !'

'These hearth-stones will come in handy for us, for our hut. I wonder where Haggish got them from. He must have known the country around, to have been able to find such stones as these. Certainly there are none such that I've seen : these are a kind of granite, and everything about here is crumbling limestone.' And he stooped down, and lifted up what looked to him to be the loosest of the stones. *It was the stone under which Hamelin had hidden the gold.* And the treasure lay exposed to Pannifer's view.

'Hullo !' he exclaimed, astonished, 'I say, old fellow, you couldn't have left all this behind you, for me to pick up ? You'd have told me of it surely, Haggish. And you were not the fellow to forget you'd put it here, old man Jack. Then how the deuce did this gold get here ?'

He counted the nuggets over, twice. Twenty-three there were in all, large and small.

'No, Haggish never put that gold here,' he said emphatically ; part of the precious burden resting in his hands. 'No, it must have been some other man. Me or Ben, for instance. Perhaps Gavison. Well it wasn't me, that's certain. It is hardly likely that it was Gavison. Then who could it have been ? There's only one other fellow. Well, we shall see,' and he put back the gold into its place, and covered it again with the

stone. Then he took his knife and scratched the number 23, on the polished surface in the wall, in a dark corner of the hut.

'There,' said he, 'that's my tally. We shall see if this mysterious gold finder increases his store. Most like, there'll be trouble arising out of this matter.'

Next day Pannifer said to Hamelin, 'Ben, I'm going to prospect round a bit. When we have worked out this claim we shall be wanting new ground. You, mate, go on washing. See! You seem to get on well with that work now. And if I find anything good, we can tackle it when we have finished here.'

Ben was quite agreeable to fall in with the plan, for he was glad for his mate to leave him to his own devices. And the reason is easily guessed.

Pannifer 'prospected' for three days, coming home each evening tired and unsuccessful in his search—so he said—and when he had finished his evening meal he would go off into a heavy sleep—at least it appeared to be a heavy sleep. The third night that this happened, Ben went up towards Haggish's hut. Suddenly the sleeper's heaviness gave way to the keenest watchfulness. He rose and, kneeling at the door of the tent, peered through the moonlight after Ben, as he disappeared within the door of the hut. He kept his eyes rivetted on the spot, and when Benjamin came back to the tent the watcher was again wrapped in the most profound sleep.

After this incident, Pannifer endeavoured by every manner of means to visit the hut unseen by Hamelin,

but that pious man somehow lurked about continually, and never went out of sight of the place where his treasure was. At length Pannifer devised a plan by means of which he might possibly rid himself of his comrade's presence.

'Ben,' he said, '*I've* been down to town, and have had a spell; besides being laid up with rheumatism, which was a rest, and gave you extra work. Now *you* have a spell, and go and have a look at the country round. Perhaps you might do a bit of prospecting too.'

'Oh, no,' said Ben, 'I don't want no spell. I'm all right, thanks. And the country—well, the country don't please me; that's candid.'

'Very well,' said Pannifer, 'if you don't want a spell, you don't. That's all. I thought you would, though. My idea was you might like a few days off to go and see how your wife is getting on, perhaps. But it doesn't matter. She's all right, I dare say.'

'Well, now you mention it, I shouldn't mind doin' *that*, 'Enry,' said the red man. 'But I 'ave no conscience to leave you all alone of yourself up here, for long; and you not so strong, neether.'

'We could do with some fresh meat just now, that's about the size of it, Ben. You might bring up half a sheep, and some bread too and, maybe, a newspaper.'

'Yes, I might do that, but I won't go to-day, 'Enry. Perhaps I'll go to-morrer. I might take the pack-horse and see what I can do, that's true.'

Benjamin Hamelin tried hard to get to the hut, alone, during that day, but he never got a chance to manage it.

In the night, when Pannifer, tired with watching, had fallen into a deep sleep, Ben stole quietly out of the tent and secured his treasure. He tied it up in a towel, and then tied over that a red handkerchief, and placed the bundle in a hole by a tree near the tent, and covered it up with debris.

On the morrow, he declared his readiness to go to town. He went and caught the horse, and while he was away, Pannifer had opportunity to go up to the hut. He perceived that the nuggets were gone. And then he swore, loud and deep.

Ben got back with the horse while Pannifer was still in the hut; secured his precious bundle; and placed the pack saddle on the horse. Then he tied up his dog, because, as he said, Pannifer might like some company while he was away.

'Ben,' said Pannifer, as his mate was about to start, 'I'll come a bit of the way with you and put you safely on the right track.'

It's very kind you are, 'Enry,' said Hamelin. 'But you always are so.'

So the two men went up the gully leading to the plateau. It was a glorious morning. The sky was blue like a torquoise; the air was fresh with the cool breezes from the mountains; and the sun blazing down on the snow-tipped peaks filled the world with a plentitude of light and shadow that brought the features of the great mountains into a sublime prominence. When they reached the plateau, Pannifer was leading the horse while Ben walked on ahead; and that worthy religionist,

instead of turning sharply to the west, continued his course in a north-east direction unheeded by Pannifer, whose thoughts were otherwise engaged than in marking which way his companion was leading him.

Traversing the belt of forest that fringed the eastern side of the plateau, they suddenly found themselves on the edge of the precipice, and a most beautiful prospect lay stretched before them. Far down below, were thick forests, growing in dark profusion in the deep valley, where could be seen a streak of silver, glinting in the sunlight; the cause of the brightness being a river which meandered down below. On each side of this bright ray, rose the dark forest which climbed up the sides of the mountains to north and south, and met the foot of the precipice where it abutted into the valley below. From where the men stood, they could see the bare wall of the peaks, which, standing to the height of some two thousand feet, formed a huge expanse of grey limestone : and they gazed down into the dark labyrinths of the valley beneath them ; their view, in front, extending far over countless mountain tops, till their powers of sight were lost in the blue haze of the horizon, where mountains and sky seemed to meet.

'This, 'Enry,' said Benjamin, as he tightly held his red bundle in his hand, 'is a vision of the Delectable Mountains, glorious and beautiful ; teachin' us a lesson of the greatness of Gawd, and leadin' us to lean upon "One that is Mighty."' And he hitched up his belt and grasped his bundle the tighter. 'Indeed, wisdom is in the 'And that fashioned this beautiful world in

which we live, 'Enry ; and of wisdom it is written by Solomon, the wise King of the 'Ebrews, "My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold. . . . . The Lord possessed me in the beginnin' of His way before His works of old."'

Pannifer, standing behind his companion, who was admiring the view, at these words put his left hand on the speaker's shoulder, while he placed his right hand on the handle of his knife, and leaned over his companion as though he too were absorbed in viewing the scene.

'Aye? What's that you say, mate?' he said.

'"When there was no depths I was brought forth,"' continued Benjamin. '"When there was no fountains aboundin' with water. Before the mountains was settled, before the hills was I brought forth. While as yet 'E had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the 'ighest part of the dust of the world," before even that long time back the wisdom of Gawd existed. Give 'eed, therefore, my friend, and turn before it is too late. Set not your 'eart too steadfastly on gold an' riches, which pass away like as a moth fretting at a garment, but upon Wisdom, which is more precious, and upon the power of the Maker of the Universe.'

As he finished the sentence, Pannifer clutched the bundle in Hamelin's hand ; and before he could be prevented, with his knife he had cut away the knot by which the holder grasped it. The yellow gold fell in a shower on the ground at their feet.

Ben turned and met the fierce gaze of the pale, wiry digger.

'Out! you thief. Out! you hypocrite. You'd steal, and lie, and preach, would you, you dirty dog? Bah! you filthy hypocrite; you mean thief!'

Like a wild beast, the huge red man sprang at Pannifer; but the light and agile digger jumped aside, and his adversary spent his strength on the air. Pannifer was now between the infuriated thief and the precipice; and Hamelin, stooping quickly, lifted a heavy piece of stone from the rock strewn ground, and rushed at his mate to crush him to death. Forestalling the coming shock, Pannifer dodged a second time, and struck out with his knife. And in swerving aside to avoid the glittering blade, Hamelin tripped on a piece of projecting rock, and fell sprawling on the earth at a spot where the ground sloped over towards the cliff. So great was the force with which he had rushed upon his comrade, that after his fall the impetus carried him over the dangerous slope. Writhing like a serpent, and clutching at the loose stones in his endeavour to arrest his onward course, he rolled towards the dreadful brink. He uttered a shrill cry of agony, and then a deep and awful curse: and he was gone.

In an instant, Pannifer was bending over the precipice, watching his adversary as he fell from rock to rock, from crag to crag, until his mangled body disappeared like a speck in the thick forest of the valley below.

Then Pannifer rose slowly, saying the while, '*You've* gone to the Promised Land, you cursed thief, and your Promised Land is Hell!'

He took up the gold, nugget by nugget, from the

place where it lay glinting in the sunlight ; safely secured it in the red handkerchief, and, with the precious bundle in one hand, he took the rein of the pack-horse, which had been grazing unconcernedly near by while this awful tragedy was being enacted, and then he went back to the camp, by the way he had come, and was there greeted with barks of welcome from Hamelin's dog, who had fancied he had been forsaken.

And so one of the men drops out of the story.

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Pannifer's first action, upon reaching camp, was to add the gold, that Hamelin had stolen, to the store of precious metal in the tent : and it swelled the quantity to well-nigh a double bulk.

'Hah !' he said, as he stooped over the yellow pile, 'it's an ill wind that blows no one any good. What a find ! What luck ! It's beautiful, and oh ! it's good. If men *will* go and throw themselves over cliffs quite determined-like, well, they save the burying, and no one's to blame. For after all, who pities him ? He'd thieve from his mate, the low beast. And he'd have killed me when he found that I knew it. Ugh ! the swine—him with his psalm-singing and his prayers and texts ; him with his vile religion; what a sneaking hypocrite, what a cursed blackguard he was ! Well, he's gone, him and all his cant. And yet, I'm not so hard as that. I'm sorry he went so sudden-like and with no time to think. Blackguard as he was, no man would wish him to be taken off the earth like that, just

like tumbling off the end of the world into Eternity. "Lord! have mercy on him," that's what I say. But Mary? What will she say when she hears how he died? Hah! Wait, and let me think.' And he put his hands to his head. 'No, no, surely she wouldn't dream that! And yet she might. No, she wouldn't put it all on to me and blame me, surely? But she will! She'll think I did it, did it for her! Oh, God! what must I do? With all this gold, the blame will be put on me, and I cannot disprove that I did it. Woman-like, she'll love him again now he's gone, and she'll turn on me and hate me. And she'll accuse me openly, and I shall hang, I who never even touched him, I who am guiltless, I who never raised a finger against him but in self-defence! But wait, there is a part left for me to play—I must know nothing at all of his death, simply nothing. I must forget that it has happened. I will let them find out for themselves what has become of Benjamin Hamelin.'

CHAPTER IV.

The seed ye sow another reaps;
The wealth ye find another keeps;
The robes ye weave another wears;
The arms ye forge another bears.

Shelley.

DAZED in mind, his brain almost deprived of power to realize the awfulness of what had happened, Pannifer spent the rest of the forenoon of that day handling the gold in the sunlight at his tent door. At length he roused himself from his torpor, and tried to eat some food, but his plate long lay loaded before him; whilst his eyes were fixed on the blue expanse of the heavens in front. Then he put the food from him, since he could not eat, and carefully placing his gold in a place of safety, he took the pack-horse which had stood saddled all day, and led it over the table-land to the track by which, he and his dead mate had come to the Promised Land. This he followed till he began to descend. At a distance of about a mile from the top, the track became narrow

and dangerous, and in one place was considerably worn away and gave but little foothold to the horse. Pannifer was leading the beast. When he came to this place, he stopped and faced the horse.

'Now my beauty, you're time's come,' he said, and firmly grasped the bridle and commenced to back the horse over the edge. The horse, poor brute, having enough sense to see that his master was performing a manœuvre that was dangerous, and harbouring a keen instinct of self-preservation beneath his tough hide, objected violently to the proposed action by raising his head and trying to shake himself free from the hand that held him ; but the man held firm hold.

The horse, with mouth open and angry teeth all gleaming, reared on high. The man was forced to leave go his hold on the bridle, lest he should be thrown off the track into the river below : and he stood back a step or two. Then the horse came down on his fore feet again, and stood still a moment with his head down, looking at the man and snorting with fear. Then Pannifer stepped forward to take the bridle again, but the horse seeing the movement, and being thoroughly frightened, swerved round to bolt up the track. The path was too narrow, at that point, to perform this evolution, and when half round, his hind legs slipped over the edge and the poor beast slid backward over the precipice. He lay at the bottom in shallow water, on the river-bed. His efforts to rise were ineffectual, and he screamed and then lay still and quiet for a while. When the poor brute had done this three times, Pannifer who was

watching him from the track above gave way to speech.

'Poor beast,' he said, 'you've done no wrong, God knows: but so it must be. When one of us goes wrong, someone else is sure to suffer too. It cannot be helped. Poor beast, the noise he makes sickens me.'

And then he turned and walked up the track, leaving the horse screaming on the river-bed below.

After that he worked on the 'claim' till his food ran short, and though he feared to go back to civilized life again, he was forced to start off to the town, lest he should starve in the wilderness.

He took his gold, packed neatly in his 'swag,' and leaving the tent still standing, journeyed down from The Promised Land, followed by Hamelin's dog. When he came to the place where the horse had gone over the side of the track, he stopped and surveyed the body, a horrible sight, swollen and ghastly. As the stench from it was wafted to him, 'Phah!' he said, 'how awful. But he'll stay there till he's wanted as evidence.' And he passed on down the track.

It was dark when he reached the house, from which he had set out with Benjamin Hamelin, some two months before. Mary opened the door to him, and welcomed him.

'And how's Ben, Mrs. Hamelin?' he asked.

'Ben!' exclaimed Mary. 'You ought to know more of Ben than I do.'

'But he set out to come down here, ten days ago and more. We wanted provisions and fresh meat, and he was to get them.'

'Well, he never came here to get them that's all I know about it. He has not been in town, to my knowledge, not since you and him went up—that is, so far as I know. You must be making a mistake.'

Here Pannifer got up from where he sat, and standing at the table, with his two hands laid on it, he looked across at Mary as she sat on the other side. His face wore an expression of the utmost dismay.

'Mary,' he said, 'he set out to come down, a fortnight back yesterday. And I had run clean out of food, so thinking he'd had a big enough 'spell' I came to see what he was after.'

'Mercy! man, I can see by your face you think he's dead!'

'Are you sure that he has not been seen in the town?' asked Pannifer.

'If he'd come down he'd have come here first, surely! But supposin' he hadn't, he'd have got to town, and I should have had news of him, you may depend upon that,' said Mary.

'Then I'll just go into town and see if I can hear anything of him,' said Pannifer; and he took up his hat and bundle. 'Anyhow, Mary, keep up your spirits, girl. Don't you lose hope, not yet.'

'Oh! Mr. Pannifer, I daresn't think, I daresn't think. But if he's dead, an' me all the time harbouring enmity against him, as I've done, I'm a stricken woman. He hasn't been what you would call a good husband to me, but he was my man, the man I give myself to as a girl; and though times were, when he angered me that I said

I hated him, it was only jealousy to get him from those other women. Oh! My God! if he's dead, what shall I do?'

'Hush, hush,' said Pannifer, soothingly, putting his hand on her shoulder as she wept, 'Don't make so certain of it. Who knows, he might be all right. Perhaps he's keeping along of one of those "sisters" all this while.'

Then Mary dropped her apron from her face, and sprang up rigid and with a face full of passion, and shrieked out, 'Before God, if what you say's true, then I'll give him no more love! I'll leave him, I will. He promised me the last night he was here, swearing on God's book, that he'd treat me fair, that time forward. And he gave me leave to quit him, if he broke his promise. If he's lied again, he need lie no more. I'll go!'

'Now you sit quiet,' said Pannifer, calmly and collectedly. 'What's the use of warming up at a suggestion only? I'll go into the town and find out the truth, and then we can talk over what you shall do.' So he left the house; first shaking the woman's hand, by way of good-night.

When he reached the town, it was ten o'clock. He went to a public house where he was known, and took the landlord and his wife aside, and spoke to them; telling them that Hamelin was missing.

'We ain't seen nothing of him here, not this long while,' said the man. 'Most like you'll find him at his home.'

'But he's been to his home, Mr. Pannifer says, and he wasn't there,' said the landlady.

'And you say you came across the body of the pack-horse fallen off the track?' asked the landlord.

'Yes,' said Pannifer. 'I smelt an awful smell, and looked over the side and there was the carcase with the pack-saddle on it.'

'It looks bad,' said the landlord.

'You see,' continued Pannifer, 'if he'd been all right after the horse went over the edge, he'd have come back straight to me, and told me of the accident. He may have been riding the horse—he was always a lazy man, was Hamelin—and, if the horse and he went over the side together, he may have been washed down the river, whilst the horse's body was left behind: the water not being very deep.'

'He never reached the town, anyway,' said the landlord. 'We'd be sure to have heard of him, if he had. I don't know but what it looks bad, what with the pack-horse and all.'

Then inquiries were made in the bar; and soon the disappearance of Benjamin Hamelin was the common topic of conversation.

The day following, Pannifer went back to Mary, and told her that he was going with a number of volunteer searchers to look for her husband.' At the same time he gave her a leather hand-bag, which was locked and heavy, and in which lay the gold he had brought down.

'Mary,' he said, 'I want you to keep this safely, against the time I come back. It contains our earnings,

mine and Ben's ; and in the event of my coming back without Ben, the half of it is your property.' The woman wept bitterly as she took the heavy bag, but nevertheless she placed it in perfect safety, in an iron-bound box in her bedroom.

The search-party returned after six days and reported nothing, save that they had found the pack-horse, the saddle of which they brought back with them. And Mary knew that of a truth her husband was lost, probably without hope of ever being found.

Then Pannifer went back again to the Promised Land. And a year went by before he visited Mary again—a dull and heavy year of waiting, to Mary, and a year of hard work and exposure, to Pannifer.

In her loneliness, Mary brooded sorrowfully upon the strange and mysterious loss of Ben. But what she felt most deeply was when the entire sisterhood of Ben's sect came to sympathise—as they could, deeply and sincerely—with her, because of that loss. 'Sister' Bragg, in particular, was a great trial to her. That pious person would come, all unbidden, with a cat-like softness of manner, and bring her sewing with her, and would sit during whole afternoons with Mary, discussing the various virtues of the lost man, until Mary felt sick and ill with the humbug of the performance. No one knew better than herself what Ben's virtues, or, rather, lack of virtue, had been.

At length, when these colloquies had become too much for her, she bluffly signified as much to 'Sister' Bragg ; and then that discreet female changed her tactics. She

cast aspersions upon Pannifer, and threw out dark hints. 'For,' said she, 'it is truly strange how our dear brother and companion in the Lord came by his end. And you may depend on it, my beloved sister, which I call you though you have long ceased to be one of us, that when the mystery *is* cleared up, it will be cleared up by that gross unbeliever, Henry Pannifer.'

This set Mary thinking; and because the bag of gold which she had in her safe-keeping was exceedingly heavy, her mind could not but see the inference to be deduced therefrom. And, gradually, she came to believe that the story, which was current in the valley, of Ben being killed with the pack-horse, was untrue.

One day, a truly remarkable conversation occurred between her and 'Sister' Bragg. That virtuous woman directly accused Pannifer of villainy. And Mary defended him. Thereon 'Sister' Bragg called to remembrance the former attachment between the two, and expressed herself in smarting words chosen with feminine cunning. And Mary became angry. Thereon the 'sister' went a step further and accused Mary of being in collusion with Pannifer to put Ben out of the way.

'What does your friend go digging for gold,' she said, 'in a place where no gold was ever found, to any man's knowledge, and take our trusting brother along with him for? Answer me that! Who ever heard of gold being found there, at all? No one! And no one will persuade me it was for any good purpose, or that there *is* any gold there. It was a plot between you both, to be rid of a just man, and *I* know the reason why. And you

are rid him. There! the murder is out, and *I* know what your next step will.' And she quickly gathered up her sewing and departed, before the storm of wrath, pent up in Mary's bosom, should burst.

This speech, as is the case with many speeches of suspicious women, did not mean all that it implied. 'Sister' Bragg did not, in truth, believe what she said, but in her passion her strong imagination took this particular flight. But the consequence of it was, that when occasion was granted, Mary defamed the 'sister' with many shameful and black names, names that burnt themselves into the memory of her hearers: and thenceforward there was deep enmity between the two women.

Then went forth 'Sister' Bragg with her firebrand of suspicion, a quick and fertile imagination, and many texts of Scripture, and spread her tale from house to house in the valley. And soon Mary was living under a ban, as cruelly blasting to her fame and happiness as it was false. And no one would have speech with her.

This black calumny had the effect of annulling her own remote suspicion of Pannifer. But ill fame will sap the spirit from a woman even more effectuatly than harsh physical treatment. And so it was with Mary, who though she had borne Ben's cruelty with unconquered courage, was broken and tamed by the poisonous sting of slander, and her impetuous, unruly spirit became sobered to docility. This was her chastening; and it left her an altered woman, of a character tutored and grave.

With Pannifer, the year was one of long musings upon

the woman in the valley, and of fear of what the future might have in store. But the more he thought of Mary, the more his mind loved to dwell upon the recollection of her; of how she looked when she spoke such words, and of how she looked as she spoke such other words; of the turn of her arm as she performed this particular action, and of the poise of her head as she performed that; of the look in her eyes when she had laughed; of the tears that lay on her cheek, on the eventful morning before he had first started for the Promised Land. And yet his musings brought him no happiness, not even when coupled with the gold he had got and the use he might make of it. Somehow, into all his thoughts there crept the fear that she might believe he had played false with Ben. And he knew that let that suspicion once take hold of her mind and awaken her passionate nature, and he might look to lose irredeemably the kindness she felt for him, and to receive in its place her most implacable hatred. But happily for him, 'Sister' Bragg had taken the one course which drove away such suspicion from Mary's mind, though it bound herself and him together under a mutual ban of obloquy.

At length, the long winter came to an end, and the snow round Pannifer's hut melted, and he worked successfully till Christmas time. Then he came down from the mountains, and turned his steps towards Mary's house, where he received a warm welcome.

He inquired of her as to her farm and her welfare, and she answered that she had thrived and had paid off certain monies of the mortgage on the farm. And when

he inquired of her happiness during the long year, she hinted at the troubles that the 'sister' had caused.

But she turned to question him. And he told her of his life among the mountains, and of how he had thrived also. And when she asked him how he had spent the lonely days, imprisoned by the snow in his hut, he told her how he had then thought of those things of his past life with which she had been concerned. Then he asked her of the troubles she had hinted at, and falteringly, bit by bit, she told him of the mischief of 'Sister' Bragg, and of the ban that had fallen on him and her.

At hearing this, one would have expected Pannifer to have sworn a great oath, and then to have dismissed the matter, but the suspicion which had haunted him all through the long winter nights, as he sat by his lonely hearth, was indeed realized—though truly he feared the blow as coming from the woman before him, and not from the whole country side. And the enormity of his danger dawned upon him, and he trembled in his fear, instead of giving vent to rage, and lay back in his chair, turned ghastly pale, and covered his face with his hands. And as Mary went on with the details of her story, he rocked his body to and fro, in anguish. When she finished by stating that he was suspected of murder, he cried out as though someone had stabbed him in the side. His behaviour surprised Mary, and she leant across the table at which they were seated, and looked at him long and closely.

'What, man!' she at length exclaimed. 'How strangely do you take my news!'

'Ah!' he gasped, 'do you also turn on me? I have feared this all the winter, and it has made my life a burden to me!'

'But has not suspicion fallen on me, too?' Mary asked. 'Have I not borne the brunt of the charge? Yet it has not made *my* life a burden. It was news to me, this tale. It was a curious thing to think of at nights. But it never caused me to lose heart, in fear. With you, man, it seems different. You are unmanned by it. And that is a bad sign, indeed. But, speak! And, for God's sake, deny the charge.' The woman was standing, and a look of utmost terror was on her face.

Slowly, Pannifer told the story of Ben's end, in all its truth—of his theft first and of his end after. And then the woman gasped out a huge sigh, and sat down and wept.

'But do you believe me?' asked Pannifer. 'Can you believe such a tale? for it is hard to believe, I fear. But, oh! I have no other tale to tell.'

'Ay, do I not?' she answered. 'That man stole from me the jewelry I had worn as a girl, when he courted me. And when I accused him, he said such gewgaws were vanity, and truer riches were to be found in God's book. But he sold the trinkets, and with the money, he purchased the favour of one of those women. And I can believe he stole gold from you. I can believe he tried to kill you when you taxed him with it; for, when I accused him of selling my paltry jewelry to buy another woman's love with, he struck me in the face and stunned me. For that reason, I believe you.'

And so confidence was restored, and the two made their peace. Then they talked of the future, and Mary asked when Pannifer purposed to go back to his diggings.

'Sometimes I think I can't go back,' he said. 'It is so terribly lonely there. Not that I mind the place, but the horror that attaches to it. If I go back, I must at any rate have a mate, someone who will be company.'

'But a mate will be hard to find,' said Mary, 'seeing men don't like those parts, since *he* disappeared there.'

'And then,' continued Pannifer, 'I should have to tell such a man of the luck I have had, in order to persuade him to go. And the knowledge might deepen the suspicion already on me, and find me a prison instead of a mate.'

'Then what man do you think to ask?' inquired Mary.

'It was not a man I was thinking of,' he said.

'Do you fancy to take a woman back with you, then, that she may dig for you?'

'No, I do not want a woman to dig for me. But she wou'd cheer a man, and make his life comfortable. There is no companion like a woman, to drive away care.'

Mary's face was red with blushes, and half hidden; but she smiled up at him her old roguish smile, and asked, 'And who might this woman be, who you are thinking to take with you into the wilderness?'

Pannifer took her hand between his hard, rough hands, and said, 'You are that woman, you pretty witch. It is you I want to be my mate.'

She looked up frankly into his face. 'And I'll gladly

be your mate,' she said ; 'a true and steadfast one, please God ; one that will share your joy, and bear more than half your sorrows.'

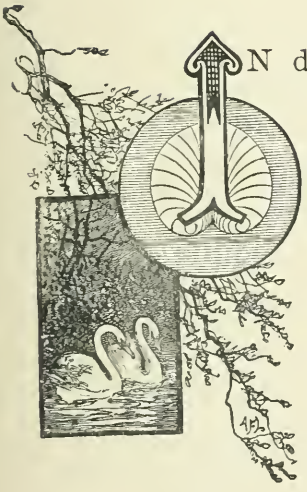
* * * * * *

Because the woman trusted the man, and because the man had told the woman the whole truth, every hindrance that could sever them was swept away. And because Slander is a blind serpent that has many tongues but little real power in its teeth, the whispered conferences of their detractors ended in futile words. And Mary became the wife of one who respected and honoured her womanhood. But for all that, Pannifer formed for her a new and happier home, in a place where 'Sister' Bragg and Benjamin Hamelin's sect had never been heard of.

HIRA

Hira.

Revenge is sweet—especially to women.
Byron.



IN days when the Maori race was recovering, as best it might, that respect for the white man which it had once possessed but had lost by reason of familiarity breeding contempt and even war; in days when the hot, savage blood would now and again burst forth in spite of fear of the avenging hand; ere ever the majesty of the Law had taught the impulsive Maori that behind each wronged victim of outrage there stood a whole avenging nation, with a gallows looming in the background; before natives sat in our House of Parliament and were represented in our Government by a blood-brother without a portfolio, in those days there was a certain man, who went into the interior to do survey work for the Government,—we must, perforce, call a human being, with the usual limbs and organs, and of the male gender, a man,—whose name, let us say, was Giles.

Giles was not a handsome man, by any manner of taste: on the contrary, he was ugly, and his expression of face showed that his mind did not experience the effects which ennobling characteristics often bring in their wake. But he was a big man.

For six weeks after going up country, he did his work with an energy that elicited any amount of approbation from his fellows, and gained him credit in the eyes of his Chief. But after that time, as he was naturally of a self-indulgent disposition, his energy seemed to flag, by reason of the fact that the barren drudgery of his toilsome routine of work, and the dulness and hard living of the tedious camp were beginning to tell upon him. Eventually he fell to 'loafing,' as far as circumstances and his Chief would allow him, and, as his instincts so guided him, he looked round to see what female company he could find.

Giles much affected female company; not that of the highest order of woman, because, for some reason, he generally found ladies' company too 'slow.' In this instance, as there was not an European woman within thirty miles of the camp, he fell back on what may have been to him the unintelligent society of Maori women—but it was not intelligence that Giles sought in women.

There was a native village some five miles from the camp, and there Giles spent his leisure time in picking up Maori—at least that was what he told his comrades, in camp.

In that *kainga* was a young Maori beauty, imperious and well born, much admired by all the tribe, but

especially by the men. Some white folk are under the delusion that all Maoris are on one dead level of common barbarity, and in this they err, for Maoris differ in rank, as we, and admire good breeding and good manners as some of us do, and a great deal more than does the average democratic Colonial.

This girl's name was Hira. Giles knew little or no Maori, and Hira had no knowledge of English. But casting his eyes on Hira, Giles saw that she was round of limb, and pretty and fond and gay, and would fill the void of pleasure from which he suffered. And Hira, anxious rather to captivate the white '*rangatira*' but not having had much experience of Englishmen, and being charmed by Giles's big, strong figure and easy, dignified bearing—we give the Devil his due, and, therefore, why not Giles?—she accepted his advances, and the result was that the two quickly came to an understanding, in spite of the fact that their conversation was limited. They made love much after the fashion of the Red Indians, without exchanging many words.

Without proceeding to paint the picture of their loves, let it suffice to say that, for a time at least, life seemed to be an unmitigated delight, one long dream of pleasure, and the world to be a place indeed made for man's bliss. And Giles's fellows remarked, generally, how improved was his knowledge of the Maori tongue.

When the work was finished which the Government, through a harassed Minister of Lands, and a pompous Land Board, ruled by a testy Commissioner, had ordered to be done in that part of the country, then the survey

camp was broken up, and Giles was forced to leave that sylvan paradise and Hira. It is only just to him to say that he went away with regret, and was even tempted by thoughts of staying there for ever. And as for Hira, she with a Maori girl's vehemence poured out her grief in the dark forests, as one possessed, and ate no food for many days after the departure of him, who was, in her own and her kinsfolk's eyes, her husband: and she lived upon the promise and hope that Giles would come back to her as soon as he was able. But her loneliness was of a kind to cause one to curse Giles.

Then, after a while, she had something else to live for besides hope—a little, yellow, human thing. She nursed it: she sang to it in her own quaint, pathetic way: she fondled it: she kissed it, as she had learned to kiss from Giles; and it grew and waxed strong and became a glossy, round piece of humanity, with dancing brown eyes and a merry smile. But as Hira clothed it only in a single piece of flannel, and because there was much wet weather, accompanied by damp, penetrating mists, when the winter came it took ill and died.

Then Hira's heart seemed to die in her, and a strong grief struck her prostrate. A stony look came into her eyes, and she would speak to none, but would wander alone outside the village, and haunt the forest glade where formerly she had spent so much time with Giles.

At length, however, a young chief came; and being attracted by Hira, though her beauty was half-gone by reason of her grief, he told her he desired to marry her if she were willing. Hira told him to go away: she was

another man's wife, she said. At that, the young Maori laughed, for he had heard of Giles's amours ; and, when his mirth had subsided, he said she might as well forget Giles, for most assuredly he had forgotten her, and would never again return. Then Hira burst into a passion, to show the young chief that she did not share his apprehensions : and then she fell a-weeping, for she felt the time was long : and, when the young fellow endeavoured to comfort her by fondling, she struck him in the face.

However, after that, he pressed his suit for many days. But Hira was hard to win.

One morning, when the *kainga* awoke, it was found that Hira had vanished. She was traced from *kainga* to *kainga* by her father and her suitor, but finally all trace of her was lost in a town through which the railway passed.

Now, when the camp had been broken up, Giles had gone to Auckland. From thence he had been ordered by his department to a seaport town, where he was working at plans and drawings, and things connected with his trade.

We people of New Zealand—at least, those of us who live in towns—get great pleasure out of life. Our leisure is ample ; our duties not burdensome ; the society is gay and almost Southern-like in character ; and our amusements are multifarious. Giles liked his new sphere better than the old 'bush' one, and preferred the society of white women to that of brown. And he did almost his fair share of work, and indulged in more than his fair share of pleasure.

At many houses he met Miss Gertrude Henderson, a

girl with a complexion that was like the pink inside a sea-shell, and who possessed a susceptible temperament, and an abundance of yellow hair, and a good store of money, left her by an aunt who was also her godmother. Giles saw his chance and took advantage of it. He rode much with Miss Henderson, picniced with her, danced with her—and won her. And Miss Henderson was pleased that it was so.

Pretty girls rarely marry handsome men—it is a worn-out truism—and this seems to be a wise dispensation of Nature, by means of which the Race shall not run to extremes of beauty and hideousness.

The father of Giles's betrothed was not displeased that his daughter should have her way, because, simply, she was his spoiled child; and her mother was one of those women who believe that marriages are made in Heaven, and that they must all, therefore, be desirable, a good soul who fancied that what seemed to be bringing happiness must be right. She was overjoyed at the match.

Then, as money was plentiful with the couple, by reason of the forethought of the aforesaid maiden aunt, the marriage was not delayed.

After the honeymoon, the bride and bridegroom returned to their home, a cosy, verandahed, creeper-shaded dwelling on the outskirts of the town. Life to Giles was now guilded with pleasure and ease and comfort; his work but adding to his zest for the soft luxury of his home. To his wife it was one round of pleasing household tasks; the thoughts connected therewith blending

themselves sweetly, at all times, with thoughts of her husband.

Hira, though ; what of her ?

She found out in Auckland, after infinite trouble, by means of the little English she had learned from Giles, where the object of her love had gone. To that place she directed her way with all the speed she might—much in the manner of the Saracen woman, whom, as little boys, we read of, and who cried continually ' London,' and then ' Becket,' and so became the mother of the renowned and martyred Thomas.

Hira reached her goal, some two months after Giles's marriage. She went down from Auckland steerage, and sick, and when she landed she tottered up the wharf in such a manner as to cause the ' lumpers ' to imagine she was drunken and disreputable. However, she was taken compassion upon by some of her own race, who were from the other side of the bay in which the town lies, and were loitering along its streets as Maoris always loiter. They took her in a canoe to their *kainga*, and, when she had recovered from the effects of her journey, she set about making enquiries for Giles. And if Giles had spent as much time, as he used to before marriage, at his Club, gossiping in the doorway, or gazing through the windows at the passers-by, he might many a time have observed the tattered and careworn Hira, as she walked in quest of him. But now, after his day's work was done, he always immediately went to his home, with all the alacrity of a young husband.

However, Hira's inquiries for him were successful, in

spite of the fact that there were other men of his name in the town. She was shown his house: she saw the happy pair in the town, shopping together: she saw them driving together: she saw them walking arm-in-arm on their lawn in the cool of the twilight; and as the darkness fell, saw Giles kiss his wife and draw her into the house. That was enough: Hira could stay in that town no longer.

She went home by the way she had come, and appeared again in her native *kainga* as suddenly and as noiselessly as she had vanished from it. The young chief, her suitor, was still there, and moreover, was as much in love with her as ever. She listened to his protestations with an absent-minded air, which seemed to show that her thoughts were far off. She let the young fellow fondle her and stroke her hair, and finally she said, 'I will take you, but, that I may not be deceived a second time also, you must first prove your love for me by doing a thing I shall ask.' He would do anything for her. He only desired to know what feat she wished performed, and he would show his love by doing it. Then Hira told him where Giles lived—he had heard much of Giles. She told him to go there, and she told him to bring something from thence; and, after that was done, she said she would marry him. And the next day, he gave out that he was going on a journey; that he would return again shortly, when he would take Hira as his wife.

Now, Giles's wife was greatly given to the painting of amateurish pictures—this was the manner in which she

spent much of her time while Giles was away at his office—and her friends gave her a great reputation for her work, and she was much encouraged to paint for Church Bazaars and for charitable objects of various sorts ; for she was a good, kind little woman, was Giles's wife. And she was also a student of Nature—if not a very apt one, at least an industrious—and her pastime, for such it was, simply,—all her life was a pastime—took her sometimes far afield.

One morning, her household arrangements being made for the day—her household arrangements always came first in her mind, for was not the comfort of her home one of the many pleasantnesses which bound her husband to her?—she set out with palette and canvas and the necessary paraphernalia. She looked business-like and happy as she walked along with all this light gear; her step quick, her eyes bright, her cheeks pink with the flush of health, and her heart joyful to think that life was so happy.

She went the way towards the sea, and, then passing along the sands of the beach and round several headlands, she took up her post to paint a view of the bay.

She had not been more than an hour at work, when she noticed a small canoe row by, in front of her, and pass along the shallows to a point of the beach some half a mile from where she sat, and where the land came sloping down to the sea. The canoe had in it a single occupant, who got out, and leaving the canoe high and dry, walked up the beach, and disappeared in the scrub, that, just there, came down to the edge of the sand.

Giles's wife sketched the canoe, as it lay, and was pleased with the effect which its presence lent to the picture. Soon she was startled by some earth and stones falling from the cliff on to the sand behind her. She looked up quickly, but saw nothing, and thinking that the disturbance must have been caused by a small slip of earth, she went on with her work. Then a head was thrust over the edge of the cliff, the head of a Maori who watched the Englishwoman, long and closely. Then the head was withdrawn, and if the painter had but looked, she might have seen the figure of a man rise up, and walk along the top of the cliff till he came to the place where it was possible to descend to the beach.

The next thing that happened was that Mrs. Giles was aware of a Maori advancing towards her.

'Good,' she said to herself, as she saw him coming. 'I'll get him to let me make a sketch of him—that is, if he is interesting looking, and tattooed, and all that;' and as he came closer, 'Ah, at least he hasn't adopted proper clothes. He's dressed in quite the aboriginal manner. Yes, I'll paint his portrait.'

He drew nearer, and she looked up at him, and smiled. He came quite close. He was Hira's young Maori chief, and he looked into the face of Giles's wife with a very ghastly and evil-looking grin. However, the little woman was not in any way frightened; she was used to Maoris, and treated them with a pretty, patronising air, which made them at once her obedient servants, though they might, or might not, understand what she said to them.

'Well?' she said, laughingly, 'How do you do? *Te na koe!* That's rightly pronounced, I think. Good morning!'

He did not answer.

'You have not much to say for yourself,' she continued. 'But come, I'll paint your picture;' and she pointed to her work. 'But perhaps you don't understand even what that is,' and she stooped to pick from the ground a piece of cardboard stuff upon which to sketch him.

The Maori still grinned at her, showing his teeth, and appearing very evil-looking, the while.

'You Missis Giles?' he asked, with the peculiar accent which dealt strangely upon the sibilants.

'Yes, I'm Mrs. Giles,' the little woman answered, brightly. 'Now, stand a little further back, if you please, and let me draw you. Can't you see I'm going to do you the honour of painting your picture?' And she motioned him back with her hand.

But he came forward.

'No,' she cried, 'further back I want you,' and she added to herself, 'I verily believe the creature's deaf, or perhaps it's only because he doesn't understand.'

But he came still nearer.

Then she rose.

'Now,' she said, 'how can I draw you, if you don't do as I tell you, and stand where I place you?'

By this time the two were quite close together.

Suddenly the man made a clutch at her, and pinned her by her arms, and threw her to the ground. She

screamed, as a hare screams that has been caught in a trap.

* * * * * *

Giles wondered, that day, why his wife was not at home when he arrived in the afternoon, tired from his work. He wondered still more when dinner time came and she did not appear.

'Martha,' he said to the maid, 'where did you say Mrs. Giles was gone to?'

'I don't know where she went,' answered Martha. 'She went sketching, for certain. She took her painting things with her.'

Giles wondered more than ever, when his wife did not come home, at dark. Then, after Martha had lighted the lamp and drawn the curtains, his loneliness became unbearable. So he took his hat, and set off to his wife's old home; thinking to find her with her parents, and fancying that she must have looked in upon them on her way home, and perhaps had stayed to dinner.

He was alarmed, when he got there, to find that none of her family had seen her that day. Then, he and her father went round to several friends, thinking that these might tell them of her. Then they went to the police, and searched the town and its vicinity till dawn.

* * * * * *

A fortnight later, Hira had taken the young chief for her husband.

And the headless body of a woman, swollen, and half-eaten by the denizens of the sea, was washed ashore and left high and dry on the sands in front of the town where Giles lived. The body was unrecognizable, either by feature, or by clothing ; but the local coroner did his duty, and the jury declared death to have been caused by drowning to some woman unknown, through some accident unaccountable. But, nevertheless, Giles was allowed to take the body and to bury it in the prescribed manner as that of his wife, and to place a tombstone, over what was, in reality, its second grave.

* * * * * *

In after time, Hira, when the thought of the faithless Giles came upon her, would lift from a box, sunk in the floor of her hut, a woman's head with long yellow hair, embalmed with all the horrors of the Maori art, and she would chuckle over it, and hold it out at arm's length, and laugh into its poor shrunken eyes and at its poor pinched face, and then would put it back in its place, and go and suckle her new baby.

And Giles, what of him? Hira's revenge, like all revenge, fell heaviest on the innocent. Giles married again. This time it was to a beautiful brunette ; and he quickly found forgetfulness and bliss.

That is why it is written, "Vengeance is Mine. . . I will repay."

JACK OF SPADES.

Jack of Spades.

CHAPTER I.

Of a truth, men are mystically united.
Carlyle.

HIS name was entered on the manager's book as John Crookham Cade, but the world knew him as Jack of Spades; not that he was addicted to games of chance, for he seldom possessed a companion with whom to play, but because he verily was the Jack of Spades, come to life again by some method of metempsychosis unexplainable. Turn up the pack, and you will see his picture. But as under shepherd, though his face and features were similar, Jack's habiliments were diversely unpicturesque.

He had sprung from the unknown, with a certain and sure knowledge of the ovine beast, and of all its diseases and ways. His antecedents he divulged to no man. In the eyes of the manager he was a good shepherd—and that sufficed.

His *whare* was on the east side of the run. And his principal duties were to stop sheep from breaking through on to Blake's Run, which was close alongside Birchfield, on which he served ; to kill wild dogs that molested the sheep was a duty as well as a pleasure ; and it was also part of his office to attend to the ailments of the flock.

In keeping with his avocation, he possessed a fine assortment of dogs, mostly of the collie type, but counting among their number a big yellow kangaroo hound, that went by the name of Shakespeare, a beast of abnormal size, and a bulldog, known as Bacon. Shakespeare and Bacon were the favoured of their master, and were brave at dog killing. When Bacon could not catch a dog, Shakespeare caught it for him ; and when Shakespeare could not hold the prey, Bacon held it for him. Shakespeare and Bacon, combined, were equal to anything in the matter of wild-dog killing.

Jack's sheep dogs were housed in kennels or sheds, about the *whare* : Shakespeare and Bacon slept in the place which Jack ennobled with the dignified name of 'home.' It was a cob-built house, thatched with *toi-toi*, and white-washed inside and out. The building was divided into two rooms, an outer and an inner, which communicated the one into the other, and had a window apiece. The inner room was Jack's bedroom ; and the outer was his kitchen, scullery, dining-room, and the place where he received his friends. At the time he is introduced to the reader, he was receiving the head-shepherd, Kelvin, a tall, light-bearded man. The two

were smoking, as they sat, Jack on the table, Kelvin on the only chair.

'And so that's what you've come about, is it?' said Jack. 'Well, it ain't goin' to be *honest injin*, that's plain; not what I call *square dinkum*. But if you was to lend me a revolver, then I'd say to 'em 'Come, by hall means, an' plunder me of my oatmeal and bacon, an' meet yer sudden death an' eternal damnation!' But, as I ain't pervided with only that there old musket, and not a proper wepping, I shall just sign-post 'em up to the station when they come, and give 'em directions as to where they'll find the manager's safe. There, you 'ave my avidavid!'

'You forget we've got the constable man. He's death and torment, in his present state of mind and the prospect of a big reward. Fifty it is, for each of them. Wait until you see him.'

'Fifty, eh? That ain't so dusty.'

'Fifty. Their plan is to nibble along up the valley, until they've picked up what few little things they want, and then like a streak they'll bolt for the West Coast. Men are arriving there every day by the half-hundred.'

'If you'd 'a given me any sort o' wepping, I might call that there fifty or a hundred pound mine, a'ready. But as it is, I shall jest pass 'em on to the station. An' they'll not leave a rat of you alive.'

Kelvin rose to go.

'I suppose you wouldn't care to stop the night with a chap, friendly-like?' asked Jack.

Well, no, thanks: I'll be getting back. Perhaps I'll come over to-morrow, and see how you are. If I ride fast now, I shall just get back before it's too dark to dodge the rabbit holes. There's no use in laming a horse. Good-night.'

'Good-night,' said Jack. 'Thank you kindly for yer visit—it's been calculated to make a chap feel 'appy and sleep nice. If, when you come to-morrow, I'm a ghastly, bloody corpse, then bury me gently where the willows . . . . .' But Kelvin had gone, before Jack could get out the details of his obsequies.

'My poetic, puppy dorgs,' said Jack, turning to Shakespeare and Bacon, 'we must make preparations against these 'ere gents come. We'll see what we can give 'em for supper. It oughter be something spicy and 'ot.' And he rose, and went inside.

The door could not be bolted, because it had no lock; so Jack simply fastened the latch, and placed the large tin dish, in which he mixed his dough for baking, against the inside of the door. Then he took his rusty old musket, that he had used for wild-dog shooting, but which made very bad practice, and was quite past work; loaded it, and placed it in his bedroom, leaving the door between the two rooms open, so that as he lay in bed he could command the outer door. The bedroom window he left open, as was his custom, because he loved to breathe pure air; and he lay down in his clothes, with his gun by his side. Shakespeare lay down by his master's bed, and soon dozed off; but Bacon roamed about, in restless mood, uneasy in his mind, and more

than once came and poked Shakespeare with his blunt muzzle, to make him share his restlessness, and then, at length, he went and curled himself up on the hearth in the kitchen. And sleep fell on that household.

* * * * * *

It was bright moonlight after ten o'clock, and beams of silver, streaming in through the two windows, cast square patches of light upon the floor, and the night air came through the open casement and fanned the sleepers, and made the hut smell fresh with the breath of the 'bush.' The only sound that disturbed the silence of the night came from a strayed *ru-ru* that had lost his bearings and could not rest, but, displeased with the loneliness of things, strove to awaken life where life was too sleepy to attend to him. Occasionally, one of the sheep-dogs sleeping outside the hut would rise and turn over, dragging his chain with a rumbling sound against his kennel; once the faint bleating of a lamb that had lost its mother was wafted by the soft breeze from the other side of the gully near the hut, but the same breeze carried it away, and no further sound was heard.

Just upon midnight, Jennie, the old collie slut, who was lying in a shed with a litter of blind puppies cuddling under her, raised a fierce bark. And all her full-grown sons and daughters, by various sires, awoke and joined in chorus. Bacon growled and nuzzled the bread-tin; and Shakespeare rose on his hind legs and pawed at the window-sill, sniffing the air, his ears pricked. Jack sat up in bed and grasped his rifle, as the dogs outside raised a storm of noise, and strained at their chains.

Nervously fingering his trigger, Jack glanced rapidly from door to window and from window to door, wondering by which the intruder would enter, when suddenly a man's face appeared at the open window. It disappeared as suddenly, when Jack raised his musket; but before he could fire, Shakespeare, with one bound, had sprung through the casement, and had seized the intruder. A sharp yell followed, and Jack heard a shot fired. In a moment he was off the bed, his head out of the window; and Bacon had knocked over the bread-tin, and was whining to get out. On the moonlit sward, the big yellow dog was struggling with a man in a white helmet; and a scabbard and a pair of spurs glittered in the moonlight. It was the constable who had come.

'Shakespeare, get orf o' that!' shouted Jack. And the dog let go the arm he had grasped between his fearful jaws, and rolled over, and lay still. The constable, too, lay.

Then Jack came out into the white moonlight, and picked up Her Majesty's officer, and set him on his feet.

'Your cussed dog has bit me arrm in two pieces!' complained he, in a rich brogue.

'And seemin'ly, you've shot 'im for it,' answered Jack. 'And 'im the best pig dorg as ever I seen. He must 'ave knowed you for wot you are, by the many relatives of yours he's killed, times gorne by.' The dog's fore-leg was shot high up in the shoulder, and the bullet, breaking the shoulder blade, had crashed through into the chest. The revolver lay on the grass, where it had been dropped by the constable, in the struggle.

'Why don't ye kape your carnivorous animals upon the chain? 'Tis a perfect whild-beasts' show I have dhropped into, here, wid a jumpin' dancin' lunatic in charge av ut.'

'Now drop that, an' be civil. Whyfore don't you come to see a decent man at a decent hour, instead of prowlin' round 'is place at the dead of night like hany thief, when we was ripe an' ready to receive a force of armed convicts escaped from prison? Now, answer me that? The dorg, 'e took you for a lag; and that's what you bloomin' well are, only a white-washed one.' Jack here paused, while he supported the stricken man into the hut. 'You may thank yer lucky stars, as 'ow you ain't cold meat, and fit only to be put into yer coffing. But for that same dorg, as you've brutally murdered out there, I should ha' fired, and then you'd 'a bin a corpse, sure as the Queen's 'ead's on a shillin'. I'm a shot, *Hi* am. An' when *Hi* mean business, I break things. Any'ow, I'm safe at six yards and a 'alf. Now, stop cussin', while I take orf yer jacket and examine the wound.' Carefully he peeled off the blue tunic, and bared the constable's arm. The dog had seized him just below the elbow. 'Come now, that ain't so bad,' said Jack. 'That ain't anythink like wot he might 'a done. I'll bathe it a bit.' He fetched some water, and, having bathed the wound, tied up the man's arm with lint made from part of his table-cloth. Then he went to look at Shakespeare. He found the hound quivering with pain, his nose held high in the air, and his breath coming in short, sharp gasps. Bacon was administering comfort

by gently licking the wound. As Jack handled the injured limb, the hound caressed his face, though he was trebling his agony with every movement of his fingers. At a glance Jack saw that the dog must die. Gently he patted and stroked his head, and though in excessive pain, the warm-hearted creature wagged his tail, and looked lovingly up into his master's face with that sad look, which was characteristic of the deer-hound blood in him. Then Jack went into the hut and took the constable's revolver, which was still loaded in five chambers, and shortly afterwards the officer heard the report which announced the death of Bacon's brother-in-arms.

Sheehy's wound—the constable was from Erin, and he was named accordingly,—was not serious, though he made more fuss over it than the dead dog had done over his.

Jack was duly informed that its throbbing and smarting were beyond all endurance, and he was persuaded to undo the bandages and, as the constable said, suck the poison from the wound. Jack's feelings towards Sheehy were such that he could have kicked him, thankfully; and he was only restrained therefrom by his consciousness of the man's helplessness. But he sucked at the wound for half an hour, spitting the blood, which he drew from the arm, into a basin. And the operation proceeded amid much bad language from Sheehy. And Bacon stood by, wagging his tail, finding food for keen enjoyment in the sufferings of the man who had shot his mate.

At length Jack stopped sucking the wound. 'Look 'ere, mister,' he said. 'Leave orf cussin', and attend. The blood 'as stopped runnin', and now's the time to cauterise the wound. I'll now take an' light the fire, and heat the irons. It's just as well to take hevery precaution. If my dorg *was* mad, why it 'ud be a pity that such a great military genius, as yerself, should be lost to the country by reason of goin' mad, too. For my part, I look on yer as a puffic Dook o' Wellington an' Lord Napier o' Malaga rolled into one; and I'm hanxious for to do all I can for the likes of such a stout-'earted, up-standin', fine, big, strappin' 'ero of a warrior. Whereabouts on yer is it you've hidden yer Victoria Cross?'

'No, no, me man, do not be persuaded to do ut, not for the wurrld—the shock av the op'ration wud be too great for me system,' said Sheehy. ''Tis the shock I fear: as for the hydrophoby, though I was powerfully in dread av ut at first, I misremembered that such a malady does not exist in this colony. I have no fear av ut whativer. 'Tis just a little slape I'm wanting; and I will have a littie talk wid you about the Duke, to-morrow morning, when I am rested. But wait. Maybe I will have just a dhrop av whiskey—mind, I say a very small dhrop, just a taste—'twill act as a sedative; leastwise, 'tis a capital remedy for snake bite, and should prove useful wid whild dogs as well.'

Jack had no whiskey; and he said so.

'Ah! 'tis just as I should have thought. Had I but considered a while, I might have known ut. Indade,

'tis a pagin's manner av life ye lead, wid all these rampin', ragin' curs ye've gathered round ye. 'Tis a veritable whild-beasts' show in the wilderness. Wan cannot expect a man to remain a Christian, livin' such a life: indade, 'twould be the height av the redic'lous. Ah! well. I'll be goin' to slape now; and thank you kindly for the reception ye've given me this night. 'Tis by way of makin' a man love ye, no doubt. Oh, I do that, for a swate, timid, young man that kapes a menag'ry by way of comp'ny and to help him entertain his friends. Awh! how me arrm does smarrt. 'Tis terrible wid its throbbin'. Mother av God! I'm almost persuaded 'tis the hydrophoby afther all. Oh dear, oh dear!'

'Look here, mister,' said Jack, 'don't you never fear. Pervided you're a clean an' healthy man, which I 'ave no occasion for to doubt, you'll heal up. But, if you've been much given to liquor and high feedin' an' loose livin', then I won't answer for yer. But, as for you catching the hydrophoby from Shakespeare, why there's no fear of that. There ain't no insanity in 'is family, whatever may be the case with yours. You won't be no madder now than you was before—but that ain't much consolation. Howsomever, lie quiet, and try and feel 'appy, and be thankful it ain't worse and I didn't put a bullet through your silly 'ead, as well. Whatever you come prowlin' round 'ere for, *just like a guilty convict yourself, for all the world*, never makin' a sound or raisin' yer voice for to let a chap know who you was, beats me all to little bits. And us prepared to combat with armed men, any moment. As it is, you should be thankful you

got orf with a dorg-bite, and that from such a dorg as Shakespeare. Didn't I tell 'im to sleep with one eye open, and kill anythink that come poking round this blessed *whare*. And Bacon he tipped 'im a wink, as much as to say "And I'll be of service at the death, if there's any wirtue in teeth." No wonder you was mistook for a lag, when we 'ad been dreamin' for hours and hours of these men wot you're after. Just thank your stars you ain't dead; and don't blackguard a merciful 'eaven for just gently touching your arm, to remind you that you ain't the immortal 'ero you fancied you was. Ah! but I see you want to sleep. Well, good-night, and when you next time come to wisit a respectable party, don't come peering in at winders like a thief, but knock at 'is door, 'umble and respectful, and then perhaps you'll pass for a himitation of Honesty. Your 'abits and manners is bad—but your langwidge is 'orrid. I'm ashamed of yer.'

CHAPTER II.

UT the convicts did not call that night: and, next morning, after an early breakfast of cold pork and porridge, Jack went and gave Shakespeare decent burial. And then Constable Sheehy suggested, in the Queen's name, that they should make an effort to call upon the convicts. He explained to Jack that there was the sum of £50 on the head of each, and that with luck he might do a good day's business, and yet be serving his Queen and country.

So Jack took his musket and the remainder of the cold pork and a hunk of bread, of his own baking, and assisted Sheehy to mount his steed, which poor beast had stood all night, saddled, and tethered to a post. The constable got Jack to hand him up his carbine, and slung it on his back, besides which he had the regulation

sword and a revolver, and altogether presented a blood-thirsty appearance. And but for the fact that his guiding arm had been well-nigh chewed to pieces, as he himself expressed it, he would, no doubt, have proved as effective as he was ferocious in aspect.

When Sheehy was comfortably arrayed in a manner right glorious to behold, Jack mounted his horse, a knowing, little chestnut with eyes that showed red in the corners as they turned in their sockets. And Bacon came, disconsolately waddling from the place where his dead comrade lay buried, but when he saw that it was War and Bloodshed that were in the air, his mourning guise doffed itself, and he fairly pirouetted round the horses in the excess of his joy. As they started off, thoughts of a glorious chase, with wild dogs for a prey, banished from his mind all remembrance of the grave, over which he had but then whimpered his canine grief, and he barked fiercely at the horses' heads in unruly fashion, that he might communicated to their duller instincts that sport was toward, and urge them on their way.

When the river was reached, Jack tethered the horses amongst the *manuka* scrub, out of sight ; and the two men wended their way down stream, till they came to a ford. Here they hid themselves amidst some flax-bushes.

'They'll be wakin' from their innicent slumbers, now abouts,' remarked Constable Sheehy, as he lay comfortably reclining on the turf. 'Indade, and 'tis a glorious time they've been havin', these last days. Tremenjous ! An' they've shown considerable circumspection wid all

their nefarious practices. 'Tis artful knaves, regular coal-smoked, sun-dried villains they are, this Zackers an' Haan. Now, like as not, they'll not be breakin' cover by daylight at all. Awh ! and they're equil to a dodge like that. And under thim circumstances, me son, we will be stayin' here till night, 'tis likely, and that's all about ut. But come over this here forrd, morning, noon, or night, they must, af they mane continuin' their pram'blations further in this direction. 'Tis between this strame and the Opawa that they will be lyin' at this presint momint; and af they wish to break into this piece av counthry, 'tis here they must cross. 'Tis a put-up business 'twixt me an' the Sarjint Major. 'Tis what ye called an ambuscade, a *battoo*. An' very poor sporrt is a *battoo* for thim as has to sit on their hunkers all day long, same as you and me may be doin', for all the wurrld like a couple av wallabies, but widout the tails. Awh ! but me arrm is that terrible painful wid throbbin' and smartin', ut makes me feel mighty sinsible av the score I will have to be payin' this same Zackers an' Haan. 'Twas on their account your big dog endeavoured to make mince-mate av me, an', begad, he was near succeedin'. And for this they are to blame ; 'tis their fault entirely. This Zackers is a squidgy little divil, such as a man might take up an' squeeze wid his two hands and wring him out same as you might a wet cloth, but for all that he is as venomons an' treacherous as a snake, a downright dangerous man to tackle. But this Haan is a big lump av a Jew, wid a taste for the Oriental manner av livin'. A while back, before he was lagged this last time, he had a large

mansion av a place outside Sydney, just acrosst the water, on the Lane Cove river. An' he lived there sumptuous an' promiscuous. Awh! he was a perfect Brigham Young av a man, and, as such, became notorious. Thus ut was our attintion was first drawn to him; and upon further acquaintance we suspicioned he was a man who was lagged out to Hobart in '51, and we watched the house day and night to find what divil's own business he was afther. But ut was all to no purpose. He was not convicted till long afther my time. Awh! 'twas a beautiful house an' all he had there, mid lovely grounds an' spacious lawns, covered in trees an' aboundin' in flowers; but otherwise not much better than the Shah av Persia's own seraglio. That was Misther Haan, as I knew him. He called himself the Honourable Archibald MacWhirter Campbell thim days, but 'twas his nose betrayed him. No cloak could hide that powerfully developed organ. 'Twas the downfall av 'im in the ind. 'Twas all along av a photygraph. He had disguised his face wid long pendulant black whiskers av his own growin', and the hair av 'is head was beautifully curled, an' parted in the middle, and he'd screwed an eyeglass into his eye for to give him the look av a thunderin' great swell, but do what he would there was no disguisin' his nose. So that though the photygraph lied in all partic'lars, 'twas perfect trut'ful in the nose; and by that same token they reconised him as Benjamin Haan. From that time his apprehinsion for some manner av villainy or other was but a matter av time. Evenshually he was lagged in this colony for forgery. And that's what I

know of Misther Haan. Wid Zackers I have been acquainted but the few months I have personally conducted his daily avocations in jail. 'Tis the only honest wurrk he has ever done in his life, except maybe when he was, as he injaniously said, helpin' to develope the resources av Van Dieman's Land. I hope to have the pleasure av introjuicin' you to these two fine gintlemen, in a while or two.'

And, at that moment, towards the hills across the river, a thin streak of smoke went up into the heavens.

'That's them 'aving their breakfast,' said Jack. 'Leastways, that's what I expect; for there ain't no one campin' out that way, not to my knowlidge. Jack Fuller sometimes is out over there, but just now he's working lower down the river. So I argue that fire is kindled by your friends, mister. And I'm hopin', as you lead a man to think, that you'll know 'em when you see 'em, 'cause, now, if I blaze away at the wrong chap, then you'll have to pay the damage, not me. You it is that takes the honus: let's make that plain afore we start.'

'Child,' answered the constable, 'did not I explain voluminously to you, how they were beknown to me, these months gone by? Now that I think av ut, did not I know thim whin they were tried over in Victoria for forgery in '58? Did not I give evidence in courrt meself, as should ondoubtedly have led to their conviction? Did not I pint out, beyond all contradiction whatsoiver, that the two av thim were livin' the divil's own dhirty life in Betsey O'Harrigan's place at the back

av Bourke Street, amid all their chemicals an' ingines an' contrivances, such as I suspicioned belonged to the black art itself—and thim all the whoile standin' in the dock wid faces as innocint as two Methody class leaders, but wid sowls as black as the contents av a soot bag? Is it not meself that's been help superintendin' their daily exercises in Wellington jail these eight months passed? Am I not here dispatched for their apprehinsion? Did not I say to Zackers, some ten days before he bruk out av prison, "Israel, ye child av darkness, af iver ye give me just cause an' impediment to tache ye what rale good manners an' dacint conduc' is, I'll baste ye wid the big end av me carbine till ye are only fit to be reconised for a prize-fighter that's bin sacrificed to the honour an' glory av his thrade?" An' did not I see that same black son of Satan whink at Benjamin Haan wid his evil black eye full av all sin and divilmint, as I spake thim wurrds? An' did not I know that whink meant volumns untold? Do I know thim, bedad! Do I know me own brother Michael, him that's in the Foorce, whin I meet wid him, think ye? Awh! I'm surprised at ye, young man, and you wid your intilligence, too! 'Tis the trut' I'm tellin' ye. An' as for what ye are plaised to call the *onus*—whell, I meself whill gladly carry all the *onus* you can make wid that owld gaspipe av yours there. Your instructions is to do as I bid: that's all ye have to be doin', except, maybe, to pass me a quid av yer tobaccy, to put betwane me teeth to still the throbbin' in me arrm.'

Jack passed the quid. 'And I think I'll have a pipe,

myself,' he said. 'You've no orders agin that, mister, I'm hoping?'

'Indade, but I have that,' said Sheehy. 'No smokin' is permitted whin you are wid me upon the Quane's business. 'Tis disrespectful, an' I cannot allow ut. 'Twould lead, most like, to our apprehension here. Dhrop your pipe an' attind. Sight your owld machine for some thirty yards, cover the first man that comes acrosst that river, an' have no mercy whatsomiver upon trapezin' convicts. An' whin I git back I'll tell the Sargint-Major as how you did your duty under my hinstructions wid creditable fortitude.'

'And what do they pay you for this sort of game, mister, ordering and controlling the whole wide world so neat and orderly?'

'Fwhat, man, is the consideration av me pay in comparison to the honour an' glory av the Sarvice, wid an occasional divarsion by way uv a convic' hunt, to break the monotony av the smooth an' even tenor av me way? I set no great store by me pay. An' 'tis well I do not, for 'tis no grand millionaire I'd be whin I had finished the arduous op'ration av calculatin' av ut up. But we will not talk av the mercenary side av the question, me child. Pay cannot compensate for the immensity av the good I have done on this blessed planet these last twenty years; an' I look for no such return from an ongrateful wurrld. An' that's how ut is. Not even a peerage, wid a seat in the House av Lords, would satisfy me if I was once to set me heart on getting me dues. Nothing short av the crown and throne av Ireland itself

would answer me purpose. But let be. Awh ! 'tis very slape-giving, this lyin' in the full blast av the sun. I'll just be takin' a little nap, presintly, for a while, now, and my insthructions is that you guarrd the forrd the whilst I slape.' And Constable Sheehy settled himself comfortably in the middle of a flax bush, and was soon oblivious to the vast responsibilities that his flesh was heir to. And Bacon, too, slept, lying at his master's feet. Jack watched, mindful of possible reward.

Towards noon a man came down to the other side of the ford. He sang as he approached the water, and the sound of his voice made Jack feel for his musket. When this man reached the river's edge, he ceased his music, and for a while stood contemplating the water. Then he walked into the river. Jack moved not a muscle till the stranger was up to his waist in water, and then, suddenly springing to his feet, covered him with his rifle.

'Hold on, there !' he shouted. 'Stand where you are, or I'll fire.' The man looked up quickly and put his hand to his belt.

'You move again, mister, and you're a dead 'un !' cried Jack, still keeping his eye along the rusty barrel. 'Mister Sheehy,' he continued, 'wake up, an' tell us if this is yer man.' The constable rose deliberately, and rubbed his eyes with his uninjured hand. 'Kape him covered, me bhoy,' he said. Then he drew himself up in the full majesty of his uniform, and drew a revolver from his belt, in full view of the man in the stream. Then he paced with dignity down to the water's edge, covering the man with his weapon.

'Now let me have a good look at ye,' said Sheehy, as he stood on the bank. 'Ye'll be so good as to turrn your face broadwise on. Ah! I thought as much. Yes, 'tis you yourself, Benjamin. I reconise you by the size av yer nose. 'Tis as fine a probosis as ever I met wid outside Petticoat Lane, an' with a highly-developed sense av smell, no doubt. 'Tis the one straightforward feature about ye, Benjamin. 'Tis the wan thing av you that tells the trut' always. Now ye'll be plaised to throw your hands above your head.' The man did as he was bid. 'Should you, by any mischance, happen to move till I tell ye, 'twill be me painful duty to dhrop a bullet into ye,' continued the constable, as he paced into the water. 'Awh! 'tis a swate babe av innocince ye are, to be philandanerin' round the counthry wid a revolver in yer pockut. Do not I see the butt-ind av ut shtickin' out av yer trowsies?' By this time he had come within striking distance of the man. 'An' ye have grown quite a beard an' moustaches since last I met wid ye, Misther Haan, indade ye have: and, by my likin', ut raly does not add to your personal beauty to improve ut; indade it does not. And so ye've had a nice little tower round, Misther Haan: you and Misther Zackers. 'Tis a fine toime av the year to be travellin', to be sure.' By this, he had got to the rear of the man; and he touched the back of his head with the muzzle of his revolver, to acquaint him with the fact that he was completely in his power.

'An' ye've grown a nice crop av hair, too; bedad, it's as fine a whig as ever was. Luxuriant! Now ye'll

be plaised to walk, Misther Haan, till I tell ye to halt.''

And in this manner the convict was brought to land.

'If you plaise, young man,' said Sheehy to Jack, ye'll just take his weapon from its place av concealment.' Jack put down his rifle, and abstracted the revolver from the man's breeches' pocket. 'An' if you will go to where I was lyin', awhile back, ye'll find the cuffs,' continued Sheehy, without taking his eyes off the prisoner.

Jack brought the handcuffs.

'You will now place yer hands behind ye, Misther Haan, if you plaise,' ordered Sheehy. And Jack without trouble adjusted the handcuffs on the man's wrists. 'Very neat, indade,' said the constable. 'Ye did ut, me son, as though ye were well acquainted wid the insthrumints. Maybe, ye had some connection wid the Forrce, awhile back, all unbenownst and, we'll be hopin', in a manner creditable to yer character. You will onderstand I am desirous av puttin' the kindest construkshin upon appearances. Misther Haan, dear, you will now sit down on yer hunkers.' The prisoner knelt, and then sat as he was bidden. With a stout piece of flax Sheehy tied the man's ankles together, and with Jack's assistance lifted him from the roadway to the sward, where he lay helpless and still among the flax-bushes.

'An' where is yer mate, Misther Haan?' asked the constable. 'We have an invite for him from the Governor av the Colony an' all the mimbers av Parliamint, biddin' him spend a little holiday at their expense, wid victuals found, an' travellin' free av cost. 'Tis a pity he missed ut.'

The convict spoke not.

'Ye've lost yer tongue, I persave. Ah! whell, an' indade ut is no matter, for a most ondacint tongue ut is whin onloosed. Kape ut quiet, me son of Lucifer, an' reserve yer wurrds, for 'tis as horrible onclane a tongue as iver I came acrosst, when the sewage av your filthy sowl is ventin' itself in spache. I cry shame for ut.'

And now Jack produced the cold pork and bread, and the constable and he fed. When they had finished, Sheehy said, 'We will now hunt for the other son av Satan. There's no manner av doubt, but that Israel Zackers will be lyin' low while his mate reconnoitres the ground, previous to their evenin' walk. 'Tis nabbin' you to-night they'd have been, Mister Whose-name-I-misremember: and but for this my timely appearance they'd have been murdherin' you in your little cot. An' in the face av me bein' your salvation, think av the welcome ye gave me! Awh! 'tis monstrous to think av ut. No doubt ye'd have clane murdhered a betther man than me, entirely. Mister Haan, Sorr, we are now about to continue our reconisances. Maybe we shall be able to prevent the awful calamity av' your bein' sep'rated from your friend. 'Tis anxious he will be at your long absince.' Then, he stooped and cut the thongs that bound the prisoner's legs. And the three men crossed the river.

When they had gone a mile or more through the thick fern, and had reached the top of a low range of hills from which they had a considerable view, Haan raised a shrill "cooee." '

Then Jack, alert in an instant, and mindful of a second pecuniary reward; clapped his hand over the prisoner's mouth.

'Hold yer noise, you squeakin' pig! So your mate's here-abouts, is he? Then I reckon it's you as has told us the fact, you thunderin' fool. You ain't 'arf so clever as you fancies yerself.' Then he addressed the constable. 'Mister,' he said, 'you stay along of this cove and stop his yelpin', an' I'll go and fetch the other lag.' Leaving his musket at the feet of the constable, he started off, followed by Bacon. When he had scrambled about half-way down a gully on the opposite side of the ridge they had ascended, Jack put his hands to his mouth and gave a prolonged 'cooee.' It was answered from far down the gully, and Jack continued his downward course with renewed speed. Presently he stopped and called again, and then went on scrambling down as before, till he came to a point where the gully suddenly flattened out. There, by a big boulder, under whose shadow a fire was burning, stood a man—he had just recently lit the fire, either for purposes of cooking, or that the smoke, which now began to ascend in dense wreaths, might serve as a guide to the wandering Haan. He stood erect as Jack approached, and, when he recognised him as a stranger, drew a revolver from his pocket. Jack cried out, 'I seen yer smoke, boss, and so I reckoned as how someone was here-abouts.' His tone was familiar and friendly

'Halt!' cried the man, and covered Jack with his weapon.

'Eh?' said Jack, putting his hand to his ear, as

though he were deaf; and approaching nearer. 'Have you seen my bullocks strayin' around this way?' And he edged still nearer the man.

'No, I ain't,' said Zackers, for it was he. 'And what's more you ain't wanted here, so you can make yourself scarce, as yer company ain't desired.'

'Eh? What's that you say?' said Jack. 'You see I'm mortal deaf, and can't quite 'ear. 'Ave you seen some strayin' bullocks round this way? There's some got lost, and I'm looking for 'em.' And he edged still nearer, his head bent forward on one side as though he were intently striving to hear, and paying no attention whatever to the revolver levelled at him.

'No, I ain't seen 'em, I tell yer! You just 'ook it, sharp. You ain't wanted 'ere.'

'Eh? What's that you say?' asked Jack, as he edged still nearer to the man, till he almost touched him. 'You saw 'em, eh? I'm so mortal deaf I can't quite 'ear.'

'So you seem, you stoopid gawk,' muttered Zackers. 'No!' he shouted. 'I *hain't* seen no bullocks; at least not this side of the range. I seen 'em t' other side, though.'

'Eh?' said Jack again. 'What's that you say?'

Then the man's hand dropped to his side, and he threw back his head and laughed, at the absurdity of such a deaf man. In an instant, Jack had sprung upon him, and with one hand had seized the merry convict by the throat, while with the other he wrested the revolver from his nerveless grasp.

'Now, I've got yer!' said Jack, 'You are the man

what's wanted, of the name of Zackers. Folks shouldn't whip out six-shooters at short notice and for no reason whatsomever. It gives you away, so to speak. It tells tales.'

'Curse you, you skulking swine!' growled Zackers, and he made a dash at the captured weapon. Jack fired, purposely wide, and the bullet whizzed above the convict's head; but it stopped his onslaught and blanched his face with fear. And he stood still.

'Now, you be'ave yerself, my jail-bird, or I shall drop a bullet in your in'ards,' said Jack. 'What you've got to do is to walk up the gully. Now then, march!'

'No, I say, mate, don't be 'ard on a chap,' pleaded Zackers, changing his tactics and falling on his knees. 'What 'ave I ever done to you, now? Come, tell me that? I never done you no 'arm, not that I know of. Now, do us a kind turn, there's a good feller. If you'd 'a bin in quad same as me, you'd like to get out, now wouldn't you? You'd make a dive fer to get free, I'll be bound.'

'Oh! get up, you poor ill-used hinnocent. Get up with yer. Now look sharp, before I let drive, an' make yer into cold meat.'

The man rose slowly to his feet. As he did so, quite a new light came into his face, a look of mingled surprise and doubt.

'Mate,' he said, 'ain't I seen you afore, somewhere? Ain't your name Kirk? Or maybe it's Cade? Weren't you in Tasmania, on a little pleasure trip along of some of yer pals. Five on 'em they was; Long

Murphy, Iky Hyams, Jake Wiggins, Sam Velpers and his brother The Weepin' Pitcher. And wasn't you known by the proud title of the Dook of Lambeth?—to distinguish you from the Archbishop of Canterbury. You see, I remember you quite well, though what yer fam'ly name was, I ain't acquainted. But that don't matter. An' you lived sometimes near the Radcliffe 'Igh, and sometimes in the Noo Cut—accordin' to circumstances; an' you'll remember my name when I says——'

'I don't want to know yer bloomin' name, nor to 'ave my 'ole family 'istory repeated by such as you,' said Jack. 'What I want, is to 'and you hover to safe keepin' where they looks after lags like you for nothink: and I'll then pocket my twenty-five pound, and drink yer bloomin' 'ealth. That's all. Now walk up the gully, d'yer hear!' The man did not stir. He gave way to a gabble of speech.

'Why I thought I knoo yer face, when you come up at first, actin' the deaf bloke. 'Ere, I say, Cade, don't you go for to think I don't know yer, because I do. Do a cove a good turn, there's a good feller. You've 'ad luck; I ain't. You ain't been treated unmerciful, same as me. You might 'ave a little pity. It's mortal 'ard you are on a cove, an' 'im one as knoo yer, same as I done. Why you remember me. I used to go along of you to old Solomon's, back of the Noo Cut, where you and me learned the first principles of our perfession. 'Ere, I say, give us a chance this once, an' I'll thank you awful. You ain't a-goin' to peach on an old pal? You can't be a-goin to do that! You'll give an old mate a chance,

now, wont yer? My name weren't Zackers, them days, and that's truth ; an' I thought as 'ow——'

'Stop it!' cried Jack, angrily breaking off the whining intercession. 'If you come along nice an' quiet, I shan't shoot yer. There, that's the good turn I'll do yer. Now, just you travel up the gully, quick time!'

Murmuring discontentedly, the man began to move forward. But he had not gone a dozen yards, Jack following close at his heels and covering him with the revolver, when all of a sudden he stopped and faced round on his captor. Peering closely into Jack's face, he bent forward and made with his hands some curious passes in the air.

'Now then, what yer up to?' said Jack. 'Go on, will you!'

'No, mate, don't you go for to pretend you don't understand them signs. I know I ain't a-been what you call a perfect brother, not by long chalks, but I ain't split on a pal, never. I never come so low as that. P'raps I did once forget meself as far as to sneak a watch from a member's girl, and so deserve, accordin' to rule, to forfeit my priv'leges. But I did it unbeknownst, an' I paid for the ticker three times over. Look here, mate, give us one more chance: I'll go straight hereafter if you do. S'elp me Gawd, I will!' And he knelt, and clasped Jack round the knees, while the revolver hung limp, in close proximity to his head.

Then Jack of Spades did a curious thing. He too knelt, and then threw his weapon on to the turf. He placed his two hands one on either of his vis-a-vis'

shoulders. 'Give your number of fellowship,' he said.

'Number Fifty-two,' said Zackers.

'Number Fifty-two,' said Jack, 'give the Second Sign of Fellowship, and say yer catechism and the password.'

Zackers placed his two hands upon Jack's head in peculiar fashion, bent forward, and whispered in his ear.

'Rise, Number Fifty-two,' said Jack, 'and give the Flying Token.'

Zackers rose, and walked briskly past Jack, and, as he passed him, made a peculiar motion with his left hand, in the form of a secret salute; and Jack answered him in like manner.

'Pass on your way, Fifty-two. Your pal's word's his bond unbroken.'

'I thank yer, Forty-five; I prize the Token.'

And Zackers passed down the gully.

Jack walked up the gully without giving another look at the retreating figure of Zackers; and the revolver lay where it had been dropped upon the grass. It was as though two brothers had met in the fore-front of the fray, and had left each other without a blow being exchanged.

Bacon followed his master, his tail held inexpressive and still; but now and again he would halt and glance back at the relinquished Zackers, and a troubled expression on his face told that it was beyond his comprehension to understand what foolishness had suddenly seized his master.

'Did not I hear a shot?' asked the constable when Jack got back.

'Did you 'ear a shot? Well, I reckon you did, unless you're deaf!'

'So he tried that game, did he? Ah! a bloodthirsty villain, is Zackers. And on a nakid man, too. Awh! he's an awful coward, is Zackers. But we must give him freedom a little while longer, till me arrm's mended. Then 'twill go hard wid Israel Zackers; his punishmints will be sevenfold increased, an' the atonemint av his sins in this wurrld will be only one degree milder than the purgathry that's savin' up for him in the next. Now thin, ye scut, there,' he said, addressing Haan, 'get up an' travel. 'Tis a nice fine jaunt ye've had these last days, an' no doubt the change av air, an' the alpine climbin', an' the gineral tower round, will have largely binifited yer constitushin; but I've no manner av doubt ye'll be feelin' home-sick to get back agin to yer owld quarters, to revel in the society av yer friends, more partic'lar now that Misther Zackers has seen fit to desart ye in this onfriendly manner. He's no gintilman, is Zackers. Now, Misther Spring-heel-Jack, or whativer ut is ye are called, we'll be goin'. I own, yer attintion to duty has bin passable, although Zackers was one too many for ye, this tide. But he'll bide safe an' sound, these few days, the whilst I escort this gintilman, here, to his home. Now, Misther Haan, Sorr, ye'll be plaised to peramulate. Awh! but I feel as though I needed some bull's mate and puddin', placed nately in me stomach, to protect the sides av ut from rubbin' togither. Awh! 'tis appetizin' wurrk, this racin' and chasin' afther picnicing convicts. It is that. But 'tis twenty-five

pound this day's pig huntin' has brought the two av us. 'Tis no so bad, me bhoy. And to Misther Haan, here, 'twill bring contimplation, and a beautiful quietude av sowl that the Pope himself might envy. Awh! 'tis the life av an anchorite ye'll be leadin' these months to come, all in your own little cell, wid no one to disturb your devotions. Now, git on wid you! March!'

* * * * * *

That evening, when Constable Sheehy had departed from Jack's hut, his prisoner's arm strapped to his stirrup, Jack received a visitor whom he ensconced in his inner room. And that man went not abroad by daylight, for many weeks. But by-and-by Jack introduced a man called Masterman to the manager, as being an old chum of his who desired work; and this new man was made 'rouse-about,' at a fixed though modest salary, with board and lodging thrown in. But before many months had gone by, Masterman and the Jack of Spades went off together to the West Coast gold-fields, where they drop out of history.

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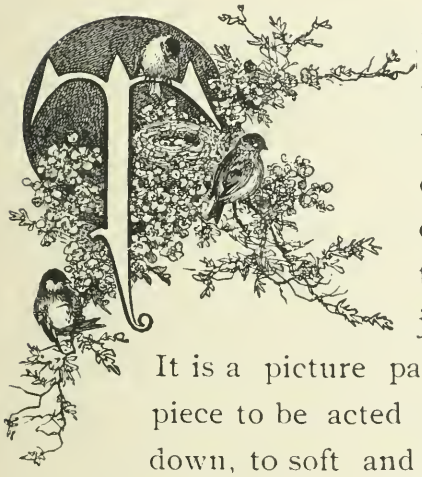
Constable Sheehy, even when his arm was healed, failed to find Israel Zackers; and it was, for a long while, the wonder of the Valley, what had become of that reprehensible person. Keen-eyed musterers were wont to look for his bleached bones upon the hills and in the creeks, for many seasons after. But they found them not.

RETA THE URUKEHU.

Reta the Urukehu.

Ah me ! for aught that ever I could read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth.

Midsummer Night's Dream.



THIS is the story of Reta the *urekuhu*, told as in a whisper, when the twilight obscures the sharp outline of things visible, and leaves the shapes of spectral objects shadowy and vague. It is a picture painted in subdued colours ; a piece to be acted with the foot lights turned down, to soft and sombre music. For this is naked tragedy, of a kind seldom dreamed of, which would, if represented too truly, make the audience turn away, sick with the nausea of savage things. Let it rest at that, then ; a string of half-told truths ; a tale with some parts left out ; a picture painted not too vividly ; one act of a drama that can never be finished.

Reta came from her village on the Whanganui one spring, and lived in the house of her sister, the wife of Hori-hapi, a great man in the *kainga* of Pukawa ; for Hori-hapi's sister, Rangi, was wife to Te Heuheu, who was lord of all Taupo and of a great deal else beside.

It was at that time when, but for the devastations of a chance *taua*, here and there, peace reigned over all Maoriland; before the white man had dispossessed his brown brother; when the deadly tribal wars were becoming less fashionable, and when the Maoris all along the coast were learning to imbibe British spirits, and were receiving samples of the various brands of British theology.

So far as Taupo was concerned, the people were learning the white man's religion from an Anglican priest named Villiers, who had forsaken house, and brethren, and lands, and all that England could give, to preach the kind Message of Peace, in the wilderness. And one day he shall receive his reward, though, truly, reward entered not into his calculations.

To him Te Heuheu Iwikau had extended the warmest welcome; he had allotted to him a portion of ground, whereon had arisen a mission-house, schools, and a church; and had commanded all people to respect his white guest, his *pakeha*. It was fashionable for a great chief to own a white man; and Te Heuheu took a great pride in his, for he was a fine specimen of the breed, and, furthermore, had brought a wife with him, the first white woman to set foot on the shores of that lake, a woman of remarkable beauty and inimitable courage.

But though his people took to the new religion much as ducks take to water, Te Heuheu could never make up his mind to become a Christian himself. And for this reason: the white *tohunga* was so arbitrary about his

religion. Those who entered its fold had to conform and reform in so many particulars. For instance, Te Heuheu remarked that upon receiving baptism Hori-hapi had dismissed all his slave women, and retained but one wife. And this new *tohunga* said that he, Te Heuheu, would have to do likewise, if he became a Christian. And who ever heard of a Te Heuheu conforming to the dictates of any man? Who could imagine Te Heuheu Iwikau humbling himself to learn of any, as he had learnt of his great brother Tukino, the deep reasoner, the mighty schemer, the terrible, who lay sleeping his last long sleep beneath the mountain side which had fallen on him suddenly, ending all his plans and schemes and wars for evermore? No, this strange *karakia* was a very good *karakia* for the people; it would teach them to order themselves lowly and reverently to all their betters—for so the missionary was wont to instruct his neophytes—and such was a consummation devoutly to be wished; but, for himself, Iwikau would have none of it. If there could be one mode of baptism for the slave and another for Iwikau, well and good. But as things were, NO. Besides, did not the *pakeha* distinctly say, that to be admitted to the new religion Iwikau would have to dismiss *his* slave-wives, Paku, and Rangi, and Huia, and Rongo, and Mira, all of them handsome and three of them young, and retain only Rui-ngarangi, his old and wrinkled spouse? Monstrous! He might suffer the new religion, so long as it did not interfere with his *mana;* he might even go into the church when the people worshipped, but it was not to be expected that

he, Te Heuheu Iwikau, who, if he had his rights, would himself one day become a notable *wairua*, should bow down submissively to this white man's *atua*.

So that when the *urukehu* maiden arrived at Pukawa, the chief continued to live polygamously, though most of the people in his *kainga* were Christians; and Reta little thought that before the summer was passed she would be the cynosure of all eyes.

Usually, an *urukehu* was held somewhat in contempt, by reason that Maori taste demanded that a woman's hair should be black, whereas an *urukehu's* was a shade of brown. And as with us, red hair is often held a misfortune, so with them brown; not, however, that there lacked Maoris who admired an *urukehu*, just as we do not lack those who admire the colour of auburn hair.

But Reta was an *urukehu*, *par excellence*, and was esteemed beautiful by all who saw her. She was a tall, shapely girl, besides, and her strange beauty made the beauty of other women to pall, and seem insipid. The great charm of her lay in her manner of saying and doing things, and in the expression of her eyes. Her manner was seductive; her eyes were far-away looking, liquid, beseeching, and told so much more eloquently than words the tender feelings nurtured in her breast. Not that she could not be loquacious. None were more so when the gay mood was on her. Then it was that she would laugh and play with her girl companions, and her merriment being infectious, the *kainga* would re-echo with the sound of happy voices. And at other times she would sit all day, sadly gazing across the lake, and for

no amount of coaxing would she talk to anyone ; and, like as not, she would strike at the girl who came to rouse her from her reverie with some foolish joke.

And when a young girl dreams day-dreams in such fashion, the wise say she is in love. So it is with white, and so it is with brown maidens. But where was Reta's lover ?

Te Heuheu greatly admired her beauty, as did all others who saw her. But then Te Heuheu already possessed six wives, and further, he was pledged to Villiers not to make additions to his harem. Yet, when his eyes fell upon Reta, he deeply regretted that promise, and wondered if it were possible to set it aside with decorum. The sight of her had renewed his youth in him, and old as he was and for all his grizzled hairs, he felt his hard old heart beat the quicker when she approached, and his cooling blood to warm and tingle if by chance her hand touched his over the *papa huahua* or in the canoe. But then that promise of his ; how could he repeal it with decorum ? And then again, were her day-dreams of him ; were her thoughts turned to the honour of being loved by the chief of that great lake-country ? To this last question he was quickly to receive an answer.

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The grim old chief went one day to Tokaanu, to take the baths. Then, as now, the custom of Maoris was to soak luxuriantly in the hot springs, a habit which cured many of their physical ailments, and procured for them an immunity from many diseases.

That day, there were many groups of bathers in the springs at Tokaanu. And the great chief, when he had enjoyed refreshing ablutions in one spring, passed on to another. As he approached this spring, he noticed a figure bathing in it. But what of that? As he gained a closer view, he noticed it was the figure of a woman. But, still, what of that? It was the *urukehu* bathing there. Ah! that was another matter—from that moment he made up his mind that she should become his wife. Then, she in the generous warm bath, and he on the bank, a conversation followed. Without embellishing his theme with the numerous protestations, such as are used by civilised lovers, he came bluntly to the point and expressed his wish. She laughed a merry laugh and told him the *pakeha* said that he had too many wives already. He said the *pakeha tohunga* was a meddlesome man, and had no authority over him, Te Heuheu. She answered that he had best go home to Rui his wife, and ask her to tell him the names of all his grandchildren and the number of his grey hairs. And he said that, at any rate, he would get down into the spring; and, unloosing his *ihupuni*, he stept down into the water. The girl 'rose up in the water as beautiful as the wild white hawk, and stept upon the edge of the bath as graceful as the shy white crane,' as the old legend says of Hinemoa upon a similar occasion. The warm water steaming and dripping from her limbs, Reta for a moment stood on the bank and scornfully regarded the old chief as he squatted in the bath, and then she laughed a taunting laugh—for the old man sitting in the hot spring, with only his grizzled,

knarled head above the water, was not a dignified or awe-inspiring object—and then she walked disdainfullly away, wrapping her *parawai* about her waist as she left the rejected Iwikau to enjoy the properties of the kindly water, in solitude.

But when the old chief got home that evening, he told Rui that he was going to add to the number of his household ; not that he purposed taking another slave, but that he intended taking another wife, a consort, in fact, who should be second only to his much-beloved Ruingarangi, the Heaven Sprinkler. And the new wife would be Reta the *uruhehu*.

It might be imagined that the prospect of being made the wife of the chief whose *mana* reached from the deep waters of the Waikato to the rapid Manawatu, and from the East Cape through all the wilds of Urewera to the pleasant Whanganui, would have rejoiced the heart of the *urukehu*—for Iwikau was the greatest Maori of his day. But the Maori girl is a creature of impulse : she falls in love after the manner of Æneas's Dido, and is not easily won by an old man's wrinkles and a grizzled pow. When she loves, she loves with a vehemence that is strong as a river in flood. When she does not love, wooing avails not. With Reta it was thus. And however great the honour of being Te Heuheu's wife, the prospect had for her no charm, but only a sickening revulsion. Had he been young and handsome, things might have fallen out differently. But as it was, NEVER. She would rather brook his displeasure than submit ; and Te Heuheu's displeasure was a serious thing to brook,

as the whole *kainga* well knew, and as many another *kaianga* knew also, and as poor old Tupa with her injured spine could tell, and Martiaha the Reader.

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It was dark, and the whole *pa* was wrapped in silence and repose. Reta, who had gone supperless to bed, found herself on a sudden, possessed of a hunger too great to be staved off till morning. She rose from her couch, and went to the *whare-umu* to get some food; and as she was returning to her hut, a strong hand seized her suddenly and dragged her into another. It was the hand of Te Heuheu.

At first he talked calmly to her, and soothed her fears, and persuaded her not to cry out. He gently fondled her, and told her how earnestly he wished her to be his wife. He praised her beauty and told her how great was his passion for her. But she struggled to free herself from his embrace, but could not. Then she remained still and passive, as he continued his uncouth courting. At length she said she would consent, but the *pakeha* must first perform the prescribed ceremonies. And this she said because she knew that the missionary would refuse to perform his office. But, Te Heuheu asked, what cared she for Christian marriage? If Maori marriage—it is simplicity itself—were good enough for him, it should be good enough for her. Was a man of his *mana* to be at the beck and call of his *pakeha?* But somehow the argument had no virtue in it. The girl still remained obdurate. And then at last Te Heuheu lost his patience, and said she *must* marry him—

Maori fashion. And there was a struggle. Reta, seeing by the dim light of the whale-oil lamp a clasp-knife lying on the floor, quickly snatched it, and struck the great chief a blow that was aimed at his vitals but which he caught upon his arm.

There is nothing which staunches love like blood. Te Heuheu fell back in astonishment and pain. And Reta, the knife still in hand, fled from the hut to her sister's, and, gasping out her words, told her tale ; and next morning the scandal was the gossip of the whole *kainga*. And Te Heuheu kept his hut, and nursed his wounded arm in silent anger.

Some days went by before the old chief was seen abroad in the village, and during that time there were great *koreros* held in Hori-hapi's hut. But all the talk ended in inaction ; for it was acknowledged, at length, that though the new *karakia* was against him in this matter, yet, after all, the chief was the chief, and not being a Christian he was not bound to restrict the number of his wives ; and the tribe could not interfere. And Reta sat by, silent and miserable, and listened to this verdict, and perceived that she was clean given over to destruction. Then, and not till then, did she divulge the secret which she had long cherished in her bosom. She told those assembled the reason that had brought her to Taupo, and why she could not accept the great chief's love. A year before, she said, one of their young chiefs had visited her *kainga* on the Whanganui, and had fallen in love with her. Here, an old woman seated at the end of the hut, broke out, '*Tapiri! Ae! Tapiri!*

Kua mohio au,' by which she meant that the girl's lover was Tapiri her son. And the name of Tapiri was bandied from mouth to mouth.

When all was quiet again, Hori-hapi asked Reta to proceed ; but she had very little to say. She told how her father had thought Tapiri unworthy of her : and so he, perforce, had returned home mateless. But when her lover had gone, her heart for the first time told her how deeply she loved him. And so she had left her tribe and followed him, only to find that he had gone off with a *taua* to the Waikato ; and oh ! and oh ! that he would return, and flee away with her to the banks of the mighty stream that flowed so swiftly towards her home.

The result of this discourse was that a deputation waited upon Te Heuheu next morning. They found him sitting in front of his house, warming himself in the genial sun. Deferentially, a wish was expressed that he would proceed no further in this business, but let the girl remain peacefully in the *kainga* until the *taua* returned. And then, if Tapiri did not marry the *urukehu*, no more could be said.

The great chief rose, and grasping his *taiaha* in his unwounded hand, made great oration. He ranged up and down the *plaza* of the *pa*, flourishing, stamping, gesticulating, as he had once done over the desecration of his brother's *tapu*. But this time he kicked no defenceless Tupa in the back. But he foamed with rage, and flourished his *taiaha*, and declared that none such wretches, as they, should curb his will. Who had ever

before questioned the *mana* of Te Heuheu, or had dared to tell him, when he should rise and when he should sleep, whom he should marry and whom he should not? It was because of this foolish new religion which the *pakeha* had taught them, that they dared to dictate to him thus. Was there to be set up another *mana* by the side of his? Was this white *tohunga* the ruler of Taupo, or was he, Te Heuheu? If the *tohunga*, where was his *mana*? Could Villiers lead a *taua*? No. Could he live a day longer in Pukawa than Te Heuheu wished? No, not an hour. Had he a single warrior who would obey his call? Not one. Then where was his *mana*? Truly, his *mana* was of a kind that the great chief could not appreciate. But if he interfered with the *mana* of Te Heuheu, then the *pakeha* should depart quickly, and his religion with him; and, as for his converts, let them make themselves invisible. Certainly he should be master, at least in his own *kainga*. And if he heard anymore of their fool's talk, they should find, everyone of them, that the strength of Te Heuheu Iwikau was as great as of old, when he had conquered and subdued better men than they. What! would *they* defy him? Let them beware lest they presumed too much on his forbearance. Out on them, one and all! Let him hear no more of this talk, or, by the shade of his brother Tukino, they should rue the day they were born. And because the thing had somewhat gone out of the fashion, he stopped short at threatning them with violence.

So in spite of the influence of the *karakia*, and in spite of threatened censure, Te Heuheu was left in peace to

add to the number of his wives. And the poor terrified girl, who had caused all this great disturbance, had stood behind the crowd, and listened tremblingly to the threats of her terrific suitor, and plainly saw the gash she had made in his arm. And she quaked with fear at the prospect of her future. But as before her mind rose up the vision of her absent lover, her breast heaved with emotion, and quickly her heart became staunch as iron. For there was still a way of escape for her; there was yet left a thing for her to do, whereby she could thwart even this great chief. And that thing she would do.

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In a little bay near Motutere there stood a solitary hut. In it lived a man, wifeless, childless, companionless, shunned by all who passed by, spoken to only from afar, despised, a *ngerengere*. Since he had taken up his abode in that bay, long years before, he had seldom gone near any of the villages or *pas* that were on the margin of the lake. His canoe lay on the beach, but he used it only for fishing. He was the most wretched of all people. And before long he might expect that even his fishing excursions would cease. For how can a man fish that has lost his hands? And when that great misfortune had fallen, how could he plant his little patch of *kumeras;* how cook his miserable meal of fern-root? When those dreadful days should come, he would be forced to wander from *kainga* to *kainga*, and to cry out from afar for food, and often go empty away; and, finally, to die of hunger, or cold, or through his fell disease.

This man was a leper.

Though never very rife, and seldom found on the coast, leprosy certainly did exist amongst the Maoris, as eye-witnesses can prove; but in these days a *ngerengere* would be hard to find. Perhaps the disease originated in the quantities of dried and putrid fish they used to eat; perhaps it is that the Maoris are akin to the Hawaiians, to whom the disease has long been a scourge. But amongst the Maoris, perhaps owing to their habit of bathing so frequently in the hot springs, the disease was, fortunately, so rare, that it was with great difficulty that leper man found leper wife, and so propagated leper children. And, moreover, immediately a person showed outward sign of the disease upon him, he was shunned and avoided by his fellows, and became a loathsome thing, a *ngerengere*, an outcast.

And such was this man, who paced to and fro on the small stretch of beach in front of his *raupo* hut. He was a horrible-looking wretch, as ever man beheld. His hands were well-nigh fingerless; his flesh foul, and covered with spots of the disease; his face repulsive, and wearing a sullen scowl; the socket of one of his eyes empty and raw. Such a creature's place was under the sod; but he paced to and fro, abjectly miserable, a picture of living death. Hopeless, certainly; aimless, almost; with seldom a soul who came within call of him, he was scornfully avoided and decried, whenever he pressed his needs upon even his nearest kin.

As he paced the beach, a small canoe, in which was a single person, suddenly shot round the headland of the

little bay, and approached the place where he stood. And as he saw it, he stood still on the margin of the water, and shaded his one eye with his hand, to make sure that his sight had not deceived him. Then he called out. But it was only a hoarse kind of croak, and could not possibly have reached the rower: and, before long, the prow of the little skiff had touched the beach some fifty yards from where he stood. And a young girl landed, but the leper did not go forward to greet her. He stood still.

She was a tall, shapely girl, round of limb, her bosom full and high, her ankle trim and neatly turned, her hair the brown hair of an *urukehu*. She was clad simply in a *piupiu*, which was a band tied round the waist, from which to the middle of the thigh fell strands of flax, which swayed with every motion of the body; and over her shoulders she had thrown a *pureke*, or cape woven of white flax, which reached just slightly below her waist. And in one hand she carried a brace of pigeons, and, in the other, held an open clasp-knife and a small calabash.

No greeting was exchanged between the leper and the girl. As she came towards him, the wretched creature even retreated. Then she told him to stand, and she approached him.

'Rupe,' she said, for, by some strange irony of fate, so was he called, 'Rupe, when was it that you last tasted the flesh of pigeons, and felt well-filled, as are the crops of these birds?'

And Rupe answered in the curious, husky voice which is peculiar to the leper, that he could hardly remember

the time when he had tasted such delicate fare ; for since his hands had become almost useless, he could not kill pigeons, even at their fattest, when they sit on a tree's upper branch, too full of berries to fly away.

'Well, Rupe,' said the girl, 'I will give you these here, that I have in my hand, if you will do me the service I shall ask. But if you refuse, then shall I take the birds back to my canoe, and paddle away.'

Then Rupe asked what it was the girl desired of *him* ; for, in all truth, it is little a leper man can do for anyone.

'But there is a service you can do me,' she said. 'I want you to put some of your blood into the calabash I have here. I do not want you to give me much, but only a little, a few drops.'

But Rupe asked her what she might want his blood for. And she answered that she wanted it for her sister's husband, who wished to poison some of his spears. And the leper thought that this must be some strange, new habit, for which the *pakeha* and his religion were responsible, as they were for tobacco smoking. So he bowed his head in acknowledgment of the bargain ; and with his least useless hand he took from the *urukehu* girl the calabash and the knife. Carefully he pierced a vein in his wrist, and let the blood fall drop by drop into the calabash, and as the operation was proceeding he asked the girl, since the pigeons were now his, to pluck them for him because his fingers were not of a kind for such work. This she consented to do. And when the calabash had collected about as much blood as would fill

a wine-glass, she took it from Rupe, shuddering as her hand touched his and her eyes saw all too nearly the horror of his face. And she placed the cup in a little hole in the sand, and sat down beside it, and commenced to pluck the birds. And as she did so, the *pureke* fell off her shoulders, and the leper saw the full beauty of the girl. Just then, the sound of voices was heard upon the water, and Rupe said he would go and hide in his hut lest she should be seen with him, and be brought to task for being found in company with a *ngerengere*. And presently a canoe appeared round the headland and passed on in front of the little bay, and as the occupants saw the figure of the girl seated on the sand, they called out, 'Rupe! Rupe! We see you there, you miserable *ngerengere*. So you have not ascended up into Heaven, Rupe, to visit your great ancestor, Rehua?' And this they said in derision that such a mean wretch should be called by the name of a god. And presently the canoe passed on out of sight.

When Rupe returned to where the girl sat plucking the pigeons on the sand, he stooped down to pick up one of the birds which she had plucked; and he noticed that the calabash was empty.

'What have you done,' he wheezed, 'with my precious blood that I gave you? Surely you have spilled it.' And his face was more diabolical-looking than ever, as he tried to pucker his deformed features into a smile.

'Yes, I have spilled it,' answered the *urukehu*.

'Then must I give you some more in your calabash.'

'No!' said the girl. 'I do not want any more.

What you have given me is all that your poor weak body can spare. If I have lost it, it is my own fault. You have kept your part of the bargain. It is enough.'

And Rupe did not press his horrible kindness, but watched her as she finished plucking the second bird with her quick, symmetrical fingers.

When she had done, she threw the bird at his feet, and picking up the empty calabash and the knife, and taking no more notice of Rupe, she went towards her canoe. She got into it, and pushed off from the land, and had soon disappeared round the headland.

Rupe stood, and watched her out of sight, and then he groped about the place where she had sat on the sand, and tried to find the mark where the blood had been spilled. But he could not. So he put his inability down to his one eye, and that not of the clearest. And then with the pigeons in his hand, he walked up the beach to his hut.

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Te Heuheu, to show how little he had abated his of purpose, gave out that he would marry Reta on the night of the next new moon. And until that time came, speculation was rife as to whether or not trouble would be the outcome. Some thought that Reta would try to escape to her tribe on the Whanganui; some thought that she would cross the lake, and hide somewhere until Tapiri, her lover, should come back. But she remained passively despondent, shunning all company.

At last the marriage day came. Villiers had ceased to expostulate with the chief; Hori-hapi and the lesser

chiefs stood aloof from Te Heuheu, and held their peace, at least determined to discountenance his purpose to the end, if they could not over-rule him.

Evening came; and the grizzled old Iwikau went into Reta's hut, and shut the door. And though all the *pa* was quiet, and no one came in to interrupt the chief's nuptials, or to frustrate his desire, most assuredly his marriage bed was uneasy; for within half an hour from the time he had closed the reluctant bride's door behind him, he came bundling out of the hut and into the darkness, with exclamations of the utmost dismay and horror, and woke up half the people in the *kainga* with cries. And although Rui-ngarangi sarcastically invited him to re-enter the *urukehu's* hut, nothing would induce him to go in there again.

Some people said that the girl had bewitched him; some said she had tried to stab him while he slept; everyone concurred in the opinion that something strange had happened.

Next morning Te Heuheu took canoe and four men to row him, and went across the lake to the little bay where the leper lived. Rupe was walking on the beach, as before; and when he saw the canoe coming, he wondered how it was that now so many visitors came to see him.

The canoe stayed some ten yards off the margin of the shore, and Te Heuheu stood up, and called Rupe to mark him, for he was going to speak. And Rupe expressed his full intention of not missing a syllable of what the great chief might be pleased to say.

'Rupe,' said Te Heuheu, 'Answer me this. Did

there come to this bay, a few days ago, a young girl, an *urukehu*, who brought you pigeons to eat?'

'Yea, there came a young girl who gave me some pigeons,' said Rupe, in his hoarse, croaking voice, believing that the men seated in the canoe must be those who had passed by on the day in question, and must have caught sight of him as he went into his hut and have recognised the girl on the beach.

'And what didst thou give the young girl in exchange for those pigeons, Rupe?' asked the chief.

'Great chief, I gave her some of my blood in a calabash; as much as would fill a very little gourd,' answered Rupe; his feet standing in the water at the edge of the beach, in order that his weak voice might the better be heard in the canoe.

'And what did the girl want such blood as thine for?' asked the chief.

'Great chief, I am an outcast, and do not understand these things. She said she wanted it for her sister's husband, who wished to poison his spears. But this thing I cannot understand.'

'Fool! when didst thou know a Maori to poison his *huata*?' cried Te Heuheu. 'As if we need poison to kill our enemies with, when the *pakeha* brings us guns, which are much more deadly.'

'Never, but this once,' said Rupe. 'But these guns, I have heard of them. But no men ever come to have speech with me, or tell me what the *pakeha* men bring; and I have been a leper these twenty years. And I have not seen a gun, or heard it speak since I was a little

child. Truly, I had well-nigh forgotten these guns.'

'And did the girl take the accursed blood away with her when she departed?' asked the chief.

'Of a truth I cannot tell,' answered Rupe; 'for though the calabash was empty when I stooped over the shoulders of the girl, to look into it, and though she herself said she spilled it upon the sand, yet when she was gone and I examined the place, to see the marks where it was spilled, truly I could find none. And this seems strange to me. But perhaps it is that I am almost blind, or perhaps it is that the girl did not spill it. I cannot tell how it is. But of this I am certain, that whereas, before I went for a moment into my hut, the gourd was half-full of my blood, when I came back it was empty.'

'Rupe,' asked the old chief, 'Rupe, thinkest thou, thou vile wretch, that the girl spilled thy filthy blood upon the sand?'

'Great chief,' answered the leper, 'of a truth, I think she spilled it not in the sand, else had I seen the mark at the place where the sand drank it up, half-blind though I be.'

'Rupe, thinkest thou that this girl took thy putrid blood to poison the spears of her brother-in-law?'

'No, great chief,' answered Rupe, 'else had it been in the gourd when she departed, or else had her brother-in-law told thee of it.'

'Then, Rupe, thou vile leper, thou festering, filthy wretch, what thinkest thou the girl did with thine accursed blood?'

But Rupe stood speechless upon the margin of the lake.

'I will tell thee, Rupe,' cried the chief, now in a perfect frenzy; flourishing his spear above his head, as was his custom when excited and angry. 'What doth the thirsty warrior with the juice of the *tutu* berries?'

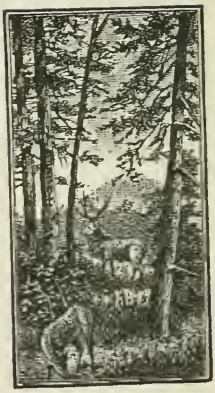
'He drinks it, great chief, when he has squeezed it into his cup.'

'And if the berries be not well strained, and if the seeds are mingled with his drink, what then comes to pass with that warrior?'

'He dies, great chief,' answered Rupe.

'Even so will the young girl, whose breast is purer than the sea-gull's wing, and all her movements more graceful than the timid white crane's, die! die! die! because she has drunk a leper's blood!' And as he uttered this last word, Te Heuheu flung his quivering lance at the vile *ngerengere* as he stood upon the beach, and pierced him through the breast. And Rupe sank down, dying, upon the sand. And Te Heuheu Iwikau bade his rowers pull home.

Thus was the grim old warrior-chief thwarted in his purpose. And in the place where Rupe had lived his wretched life, there came another to sojourn. She was a young girl, of a face beautiful in every part; soft and round of limb; brown of hair. And, as a lovely maiden in the bloom of her beauty, so let us last think of Reta the *urukehu*.



JAMIE MACTAVISH'S COURTSHIP.

Jamie MacTavish's Courtship.

Much may be made of a Scotchman if he be caught young.
Samuel Johnson.

MANNERING is my authority for this story. Greeves and his wife are his authorities; and between them they ought to know all about it.

It was the night of the Sclater's dance, when almost everybody had gone, and while Mannering was putting on his overcoat in the men's dressing-room, that Greeves cried, 'Here, Mannering, you've left your programme behind. You'd better take it, old fellow, for programmes are best not dribbled about in this fashion. They are sacred, or should be. Besides, they tell tales.'

Mannering took the thing up: it was not his. It was a programme, torn down the middle, the two halves kept together by the silk cord to which the pencil was strung.

Here it is; and it is as guilty a thing as need be. It tells its own tale, in fact.

DANCES.	ENGAGEMENTS.	DANCES.	ENGAGEMENTS.
1. Waltz		11. Waltz	*Mrs. Stukely*
2. Waltz	*Miss Barnes*	12. Lancers	*Madeline*
3. Lancers		13. Waltz	*Miss Amy Barnes*
4. Waltz	*Miss Fortescue*	14. Waltz	*Mrs. Carrington*
5. Polka	*Adela*	15. Waltz	*Adela*
6. Waltz	*Miss Jones*	16. Waltz	*Miss Mitford*
7. Waltz	*Madeline*	17. Polka	*Mrs. Hipworth*
8. Lancers	*Adela*	18. Waltz	*Miss Golightly*
9. Waltz	*Mrs. Carrington*	19. Waltz	*Adela*
10. Waltz	*Mabsey Smith*	20. Waltz	*Adela*
EXTRAS.			
1. Waltz			
2. Waltz	*Adela*		

He turned it over in his hand. 'Oh, it's McTavish's,' he said. 'His name is on the back. I'll take it, and give it to him. He has just gone down; I met him on the stairs.'

Downstairs, Mrs. Sclater told Mannering that McTavish had gone three minutes before with the Phillips-Brookes. So he put the tell-tale programme in his overcoat pocket —and forgot its existence till six months afterwards. But by that time Jamie McTavish had departed. So he

handed it to me, as an interesting memento of the past.

* * * * *

In this colony of New Zealand there is no set so truly brilliant as was the Gilded Brotherhood of Bank Clerks. That brotherhood is now defunct—matrimony and other things killed it.

Newly-elected members of Parliaments, no doubt, recognise the dazzling position they have attained, but then there were scenes in their lives which tend to recall the bitterness of life—as for instance, little electioneering incidents, and the plain outspoken terms used by political antagonists. The Ministers of the Crown are enviable personages, in their way ; but the satisfactory self-contemplation of their greatness is disturbed by the difficult business of keeping a composed demeanour whilst watching that treacherous volcano Public Opinion.

But if the beauty of life and the sweetness of things corporal are to be enjoyed, indeed and in truth, a young man, untrammelled by the woes of matrimony, burdened with no great weight of brains, anxious to climb the social ladder, might do worse than join the glorious company of bank clerks. There is some reason to believe that these gentry are the flowers of the universe, the salt of the earth.

Jamie McTavish, Greeves and Halstead were of this opinion, anyway. Jamie was an accountant, Greeves was a teller, Halstead was a ledger-keeper. They foregathered from different banks ; dressed well ; lodged together ; always appeared at public entertainments, in

company ; seemed to be as thick as thieves; went by the name of The Gilded Brotherhood. And the Phillips-Brooke girls were young and fair ; and those three young men were greatly in love with them. But unfortunately there were only two Phillips-Brooke girls, whilst there were three bank clerks ; so that unless one of the trio would be content to wed the widowed Phillips-Brooke mamma, it was impossible that the brotherhood could entirely become absorbed in the Brooke family

Greeves was in love with Adela Phillips-Brooke ; and Adela Phillips-Brooke was fair and sweet looking. And Halstead was in love with Madeline Phillips-Brooke ; and Madeline Phillips-Brooke was dark and arch-looking. And Jamie McTavish was, as it were, odd-man-out, and hardly knew whom he loved. Sometimes he fancied it was Madeline : at others, he thought it was Adela. He had photographs of both in his bedroom. Certainly he had no designs upon the Phillips-Brooke mamma.

And while he was thus making up his mind, Greeves and Halstead had been ingratiating themselves into the affections of Adela and Madeline, respectively. But Jamie had this advantage over his friends—he was a singing man, or rather, to be more correct, he warbled generally a little out of tune. Of course he could not sing without practice, and that meant that some girl must play his accompaniments for him. This Miss Adela did, and gladly. And the consequence of these musical practises was that Jamie's heart was gently drawn towards Miss Adela, and the subsequent avowal was only a matter of time.

Music is subtle in its power, and causes strange dreams to rise in the feminine mind : it is liable to subtly impel the susceptible devotee into speaking of the infinity of the soul and the sublimity of ideals, and of such-like themes. Then it is that the most extraordinary and unlooked-for things happen. Jamie McTavish knew this ; and so he strived to make his music witchingly, that by its power he might induce Miss Adela to inquire what *his* ideal was—his ideal of feminine beauty. His music was bad enough, in all conscience ; but Miss Adela seemed to appreciate his ideal—strange to say, whenever he pictured it, it bore a marked resemblance to Miss Adela herself. It pleased her above all things to be told that she was *somebody's* ideal, but when that somebody was Jamie McTavish, the budding Paris of that modern Ilium, the truly beloved of the gods and goddesses of that social Olympus, is it to be wondered that her poor inexperienced little soul thought it had drawn a lucky number in the lottery of human affections ?

Jamie McTavish hailed from Elgin. That was all Society knew of Jamie McTavish's antecedents. When he spoke of his ' people,' it was well understood that he referred to *the* people of Elgin, who had lived on the family estate of the McTavishes for hundreds of years, and were honoured by the poor, humble, honest folk of the neighbourhood, with the respect due to them by reason of their greatness. When Jamie spoke of his Uncle Angus, he was understood to indicate Sir Angus Graeme McTavish, Bart., who dwelt by the banks of the river Dee, and, from Jamie's description, apparently

lived on fresh salmon and venison. But when Jamie was interrogated by the Brooke mamma, as to why he left the land of parritch and oat-cakes and the bosom of his very superior family, he had said, with just the suspicion of the North British accent, 'Oh, young men are young men you must know, and they will be travelling to see the world, and we Scotchmen are same as other folk in this particular. My Uncle Angus would have me stay, and my mother too would have me stop at home an' mind the estate. But there are a-many things in life which are not trumpeted upon the house-tops. Uncle Angus—he lives close by Balmoral, and Malcolm his son will, I fear, be no so long before he succeeds to the title—Uncle Angus he said—the Queen has looked in on him before now when driving abroad, and he was much pleased with the attention paid him—Uncle Angus said "I fear, laddie, I shall no see ye again, whatever be the reason an' a' of your goin'. But ye go wi' my blessin', laddie, ye go wi' my blessin' wherever ye go." And the poor old man almost cried, he did, at the sorrow of our parting. But I never telt him the reason o't.'

'Ah!' sighed Mrs. Brooke, surmising some *affair de cœur*, 'Ah! Mr. McTavish, we women have, I'm afraid to account for many of the sorrows of this life.'

'My pride was too wounded for me to stay in a land where I had been scorned and trodden under-foot, and cast aside for another callant, so I came over the sea and my own folk were never grieved wi' the knowledge of the shame I bore. We McTavishes are not used to be treated wi' contemption, not by any man, and much less

by any woman. And the wound was one that couldna' be healed but by placin' the wide world between us both, and that were the best thing.'

'Yes, yes, poor fellow,' said Mrs. Phillip-Brooke. 'But who looks after your mother and her affairs? Surely, it was hardly right to leave her with the burden of all the family estates upon her shoulders?—and she a widow, as I understand.'

'Never fear in that respect,' said Jamie. 'My brother Alec is well qualified to look after business matters; he is a keen man to do with rents and such like, is Alec. He minds while I'm away. Oh, Alec is a stour man to deal with in money matters. And he's his mother's boy, too, is Alec, the very presentment of what his father was before him; so that's well.'

'Dear me,' thought Mrs. Phillips-Brooke to heself as her eyes scanned the carpet, 'he must indeed have had some great trouble, poor fellow, to leave such connections. But we'll contrive to brighten him up, I dare say.' And, just then, her two daughters entered the room where they were sitting, and a sparkling conversation commenced, which seemed effectually to cheer the spirit of the self-banished McTavish.

Five years had that banishment lasted; and he had arrived at the place where these things happened just a week before the above conversation took place. And this was his introduction to the Phillips-Brooke girls. Now, these ladies were clean given over to balls, theatricals, progressive-euchre parties, 'at homes,' moonlight boating picnics; and they dressed themselves

gorgeously in purple and fine linen, and had placed themselves at the head of a 'set' which the pious but foolish sister of the Rev. Strange Beetel denominated 'fast,' as she considered their moonlight water-parties were too fragilely chaperoned. It is true that they affected the companionship of The Gilded Brotherhood and such-like young men, respectable indeed, and very, very well-dressed; given much to tobacco; whose conversation dwelt largely upon the last dance or the next one, or upon the recent Willis-cum-Cox or some such engagement, or upon their favourite blends of whiskey, or sometimes, but more rarely, on the possible winners of the next Trial Fours; young men who had brought flirting and small talk to the perfection of an effeminate art; whose manners in women's society were full of profuse apologies, and polite and flattering little speeches; who seemed to be for ever simpering and smiling, though what at never transpired; whose names were Halstead, Greeves and McTavish, and a few more whose names do not signify. They were not precisely what you would call intellectual young men, neither would you term them athletic; they did not much love physical exertion; in fact, they shone but by reason of the plumed feathers they wore, and were celebrated chiefly as the lap-dogs of their lady acquaintances. Their intellects had been left undeveloped, and their muscles were flaccid and attenuated. But it was not for their brains that the Phillips-Brookes, daughters and dame, desired their company. Mamma Brooke said she liked *fun*, and her daughters took after their parent, and the

Gilded Brotherhood keenly appreciated all forms of personal chaff, which seemed their exclusive idea of wit and Mrs. Brooke's interpretation of the word *fun*.

* * * * *

And so we come to the night of the Sclaters' dance. Jamie McTavish's programme tells its own tale, 'tis true; in fact, perhaps the really scientific reader, well-versed and deeply-learned in the art of Fiction, might, like Mr. Ruskin, develope the whole story from the few dry bones thus discovered to him, in the same way that Professor Owen used to give a correct description of some antediluvian animal from a single member of its vertebræ. But, for the ordinary reader not so curiously gifted, perhaps it would be as well to proceed.

At the Sclaters' dance, Madeline Brooke was dressed in light blue silk, and Adela in deep crimson and black. And they both looked bewitchingly beautiful, and were a joy to their fond parent as she proudly conducted them into the ball-room, in much the same manner as a matronly black Langshan might introduce her chickens to the fowl-yard.

CHAPTER II.

She dances here and she dances there,
The glimmering, glittering flutterer fair.

No. 5. Polka.

Scene.—*The Conservatory. Enter Jamie McTavish and Miss Adela, as the opening bars are being played.*

Jamie.—Would you care to sit this out?

Adela.—What is it? [*Looks at her programme.*] Polka. Oh no, we'll dance it. Three steps, mind; not the teetotum fashion.

[*They go and dance it.*]

No. 6. Waltz.

Scene.—*Same. Miss Adela and Jamie discovered amid overhanging palms. Enter Greeves.*

Greeves.—My dance, I think, Miss Adela? Hope you enjoyed the last one. You seemed to, anyway. Ta-ta McTavish; you can go and find your partner.

Adela.—Yes, I enjoyed it very much, thanks. Did you dance it?

Greeves.—Yes, with your sister.

Adela.—Of course, I saw you. How stupid of me not to remember. Why didn't you dance it the larrikin way?

GREEVES.—Oh, I don't know. I think your sister preferred the old way.

ADELA.—Just like her, if she did.

GREEVES.—Well, shall we dance this?

ADELA.—No, I'm rather tired after all that exercise.

[*They sit.*]

GREEVES.—I'm glad you don't want to dance it. I've got something I want to say to you, and it's easiest to say it quietly here.

ADELA.—Nobody dead, I hope?

GREEVES.—No, nobody's dead that I know of. It is this. You must have noticed, Miss Adela, that I have a deep regard for you: they say that women have an intuitive knowledge when men are—indeed, that is to say, no doubt you have guessed my secret long ago. It is true, you haven't given me any more encouragement than you have given others, and I can hardly hope that you will return my affection, at least, not at present; but you won't mind me speaking? Most women consider it the highest compliment for a man to propose. I've often heard them say so. *You* may not think it a compliment when it comes from me, but I hope you will treat it seriously, as it deserves; for it's serious enough with me, God knows. [*Miss Adela's eyes are fixed on the toe of her dancing shoe, her dark lashes shading her cheek.*] It is no new thing for men to speak like this to you, I know that; but if you don't care to answer me just at once, wait till our next dance, and speak to me then. I love you, and you must have seen it long ago. I'm not worthy of you, I know that; but perhaps, I may be in

time. [*He is a good-looking fellow is Greeves, and as he looks close into Miss Adela's face for some reply, she raises her eyelids, and their eyes meet. And she feels his breath upon her cheek. She smiles, blushing, with her eyes still on his.*] Ah, you dear! You'll say yes; now, won't you?

ADELA.—No, no, no, no! I'll say no such thing. You don't mean it, I know you don't, you gay deceiver. You've said that to plenty of other girls, I know. Besides, you can't expect me to make up my mind, all at once, without notice. I'm sure, I never dreamt of such a thing—you give girls credit for a great deal more than they know. How could I have guessed it? Why, this is the first idea I ever had of you talking like this. No, I *won't* say anything now. I simply can't.

GREEVES.—Well, thank you for taking it so nicely. But you'll tell me later on, won't you? *He puts his hand on hers, and gives it a gentle pressure. The dance ends, and they rise and go into the ball-room; she leaning rather unnecessarily hard on his arm, and looking very pleased.*]

No. 8. LANCERS.

SCENE.—*The same. Miss Adela and Jamie McTavish discovered under the same palm. Enter two couples, successively, who ask them to act as their vis-a-vis. Jamie declines.*

JAMIE.—You are sure you don't want to dance this? Well, no more do I, to tell the truth. I want to have a little talk with you. [*Miss Adela's lashes droop again, and her eyes are fixed upon her shoe's toe, as before.*] It's

this way, Adela. I do not believe in beating about the bush with a woman, pestering her with conundrums about the state of my feelings, and the like. My Uncle Angus always advised me to speak out plain to a woman. Uncle Angus was a man of expeerience with the sex. And I'll be taking his advice, and will come to the point, without more ado. I am not a rich man, Adela. I do not deny that statement. But I hope to rectify this when the estates fall in. And if I present myself as a suitor for your hand—and a wee, small, beautiful hand it is—I prize it all the more on that account, ye ken—you must bear in mind not so much my present state as the state I'm heir to, and to which I one day hope to come. Eh ! there were many girls I might have had in Scotland, for the simple asking, but no, no ! I was in no mind for any o' them ; 'twas yourself alone could awaken me to love. An' speak just one wee word, and I'm all your ain, body, soul and speerit. Uncle Angus said it was well-nigh half the battle to be bold with a girl, and I'm halfway thinking he was right in this, who had no business with knowledge of such matters, being a bachelor and an unmarried man. So I tell you I'm head and ears in love with your pretty face, and your graceful figure with its jimp little waist, and the turn of your wrist, and the colour of your hair. [*Here he places one hand on hers, and with the other raises her chin and kisses her ; she not objecting by any outward and visible sign of disapproval.*] And it is a sweet wee mouth to kiss, dear ; and now that I've taken that liberty, you'll not say No, if I ask you to marry me. [*He pauses and*

waits for an answer. Adela does not speak.] Silence it is that gives consent, my dear. Then be silent as long as you please; and if you open your lips to speak one small word in disapproval of my proposal, I'll kiss them till I've made them hold their peace.

ADELA.—I'll tell——[*He kisses her.*] I'll tell what I feel——[*He kisses her.*] Some other time. [*He kisses her.*]

JAMIE.—You've no cause to tell, at all; though it would be sweet indeed to listen. Just lie still in your chair, my love, and try to realise how good it all is. [*Her face hides itself on his shoulder.*]

NO. 11. WALTZ.

SCENE.—*The Ball-room. Jamie leads Miss Adela from the Supper-room and hands her over to Greeves, who is her partner in the dance. They dance, while Jamie stands with his back against the wall and watches them. He soliloquiseth.*

JAMIE.—Hech! Greeves, ye've no chance, lad. She's vera sweet an' a' that t' ye, but na matter, 'tis but the manner o' women to be most charming to the man they intend to reject. She canna' help it, dear child. But, make sure, she means nothing at all by it, beyond a desire to treat ye kindly, laddie. [*He goes and talks to Mrs. Phillips-Brooke, who is sitting, watching the dancers.*]

NO. 17. POLKA.

SCENE.—*Conservatory. Greeves leads in Miss Adela, and they sit under the palm.*

GREEVES.—This is the last dance I shall have with

you, Adela, and I hope you won't mind if I ask you to sit it out here.

ADELA.—But it's a Polka, Mr. Greeves! Oh, do let us dance it; I did so enjoy the first Polka, to-night—we three-stepped it, and it *was* jolly. Come along. Hand me my fan. I *must* dance it!

GREEVES.—But you promised to give me an answer to what I asked you, and I sha'n't have a chance of speaking to you again, perhaps, as this is our last dance. You must keep your promise, you know.

ADELA.—Oh, all right. I'll give you your answer fast enough, but let us have just a turn or two in this dance, first. I'll tell you afterwards; really I will. I won't give you an answer, if you don't take me into the Ball-room. There!

GREEVES.—Well, I can't deny you: I would if I could. [*They go to the Ball-room, and dance. After dancing for some little while, Greeves comes to the conclusion that if he is to get his answer, he must take it dancing. His words come out jerkily, like the rhythm of the dance.*]

GREEVES.—Well, what is your answer to be?

ADELA.—What's that you say? Oh, please do take care! There! we've bumped into another couple. I don't mind about bumping the waltzers; it serves them right. They've no business to be waltzing to a Polka.

GREEVES.—Adela, I asked you about your answer. When are you going to give it me?

ADELA.—Oh, I can't talk when I'm dancing at this terrific pace. [*And everyone who knows the Larrikin*

Polka will agree with her.] Besides, talking spoils the dance.

GREEVES.—But you'll tell me? You said you would.

ADELA.—All right, so I will, by-and-by, when the dance is over. [*This remark silences Greeves, and he says no more till the dance ends. Then they walk round the room twice, Miss Adela panting and hot, and Greeves a good deal out of temper.*]

GREEVES.—Well, about the answer to my question. You said you would give it me when the dance was over. Give it me now.

ADELA.—How foolish you are, Mr. Greeves, to urge me to answer, when you must see I don't want to hurt your feelings.

GREEVES.—Well, at anyrate, I'm glad to hear you don't want to hurt my feelings. You give me some hope.

ADELA.—Then I am afraid I must take it away again. There, that's my answer.

GREEVES.—You pain me very much.

ADELA.—I'm sorry if I do. But you should not insist upon an answer, when it is not the answer you want.

No. 19 AND 20. WALTZES.

[*They told their own tale to poor Greeves, as they will tell it to the reader.*]

* * * * *

And so Adela Phillips-Brooke and James McTavish were engaged. And the Brooke mamma was radiant with smiles to think that Sir Angus Graeme McTavish would shortly be a kind of relative of hers; and a real

Baronet, too. Titles were scarce in the Phillips-Brooke family, and she pictured herself saying, 'And this silver cruet was sent out to Adela by her husband's connections in Edinburgh. And this sapphire and diamond half-hoop and these diamond sprays for the hair are a present from her uncle Sir Angus Graeme McTavish of Spurstow Hall near Balmoral'; and so on. With such thoughts as these, is it any wonder that she triumphantly looked forward to what the future should bring? And, too, how jealous the Barnes girls would be of her Adela! And what a victory over the Barnes mamma! It was perfectly delicious; a thing to be enjoyed! Oh, the beauty of it!

CHAPTER III.

Defend me from my friends; I can defend myself from my enemies.—*Marshall Villars's adieu to Louis XIV.*

OME two months after the Sclaters' dance and his engagement, Jamie McTavish was sitting in his lodgings, in the evening. He did not lodge in company with Greeves and Halstead, now. His landlady's daughter had cleared away his dinner things, and he had drawn his chair up to the fire and was reading, with a cup of coffee within reach of his hand. But his book gained but scant attention from him: his mind was building Spanish castles, resting upon a matrimonial foundation. The book gradually subsided till it rested upon his knee; his eyes were fixed on the bright flames, as they shot up the chimney; the cup of coffee grew cold, as it stood neglected on the table; Jamie's mind was exploring dream-land. And a pleasant dream, indeed, was Jamie's. It contained all sorts of things; to begin with, an emigration from his lonely lodging to a comfortable house, which he had inspected but that day

preparatory to coming to terms with the owner; then there was down the vista of the happy future the glimpse of a figure dressed in a fluttering white dress, which drew nearer and nearer, so near that he thought he felt her breath upon his cheek and the clasp of her hand upon his arm; then there were people, and carriages, and a gentleman dressed in white and black, and an altar rail, and quantities of flowers, and little singing boys, and a burst of triumphant music, the greetings of friends, a crush of people in crowded hall and anterooms, hurried, laughing adieus, showers of rice, and then——ah! then. There was a knock at his door.

'Someone to see you,' announced Annie, the landlady's daughter.

'Come in, come in,' cried Jamie, waking from his dream, and the Spanish castle suddenly fading into a mist, a vapour, a fog. A long, large-boned man entered.

'Eh! an' is that yoursel, Jamie? Eh, sure eneuch it is yoursel. I've faund ye after I've cam' this unco gait, an' bin sae unco sick.' Such was the stranger's greeting.

'What, and is that you, Alec?'

'Aye, brither Jamie, it is mysel, na'ither. An' my wame is sairly pinched wi' hunger, sae let's ha'e somethin' tae keep up the tabernacle wi', laddie. Gi'e a mon som' food; na junkets nae siccan trash, but substantial meat, Jamie.'

Jamie recalled Annie, and soon the gaunt, long-limbed Scot was eating.

'But what made ye come sae soon at all, Alec?

Why didna' ye let me ken afore o' your comin' ?'

'Ah! an' there's a tale hangs tae that, mon. There are twa-three things that gar't me come frae bonnie Scotland. 'Twas the unco gran' news we got o' your ain weel-doin', Jamie—that was the first syne. And, syne, Maister MacAlister was unco discontented wi' me, an' a' that, sayin' I was aye gaun awa' wi' a' the tag-rag o' the toon to ma destruction, birling o' the Sabbath, an' playing the de'il's beuk, an' neglectin' my wark; when, in truth, my greatest faut was neether mair nor less than a wee bit o' daffing wi' the lassies i' the shop. But he gied me the go-bye, an' caredna' gin I should starve; an' that was a' the thanks I got for serving him leally seven lang years. I couldna' get wark frae ony in Greenock, not wi' the character *he* gied me, nor in ony toon aroun'; but Glasgow, the thoct struck me, that gin I might stray, Jamie, I might as weel daunner as far frae hame 's yoursel, mon, an' there's nae tellin' I might be a' luckie yane aboon the lave—that was the second syne. An' sae I cam' t' ye.'

Jamie had never made a great deal of Alec at any time, and now he felt the bitterness of his neglect. Had he but expended upon his brother the tenth part of the care he had expended upon himself, he would not now have had him thrown upon his hands, but as matters stood he found his soul troubled as to what he should do with this brother who had wandered over the seas in order that he, Jamie, might be of service to him. But to get Alec a place, Jamie would need to introduce him as his brother, and that was where the shoe pinched—Alec was too

uncouth to stand beside the cultured Jamie ; he was not presentable in the society in which Jamie moved. At least, so thought Jamie : perhaps he was right : perhaps he was wrong. Anyway, Alec's talk was that of the raw, untutored Scot, and dealt largely with things of trade, and smacked of the shop and the counter—and such things were infinitely beneath the notice of James McTavish, Esquire, and of the 'set' he moved in. In fact, Jamie introduced Alec nowhere ; his manners were so untaught in the little social niceties, which were so prized by Jamie's friends ; his speech was to them but little less barbarian than Welsh, or Gaelic. So Alec was kept much in the background—Jamie had become so Anglicised out of all recognition, that he had forgotten even the filial bond which usually binds Scots together, and always those of the same kin. He could not presume to ask a post for Alec in the Bank ; in short, Alec was unfit for any occupation, as he put it, worthy of a gentleman. He suggested that Alec should go to some other town and there engage himself in pursuits which were congenial to him. But Alec took matters into his own hands, and, without stirring further afield, found employment similar to that which he had followed in Scotland.

For some weeks they lived together, these two strange brothers, without anything eventful happening. Jamie went his way and followed his ordinary occupations, and Alec followed his. The two scarcely ever met abroad from home. And Jamie's grand acquaintances barely knew of Alec's existence.

When they met of an evening at dinner, Jamie had but little to say to Alec, and that little was not complimentary. And as soon as the meal was over, he would immediately go out, and spend his evening away from home. This conduct set Alec thinking. He asked Jamie where he spent all his spare time ; and Jamie was much angered at his inquisitiveness, and told Alec it was no business of his. But Annie, the landlady's daughter, quickly cleared up the mystery for Alec ; whereat Alec laughed.

'An' sae ower Jamie mon means to tak' to hissel a wife,' said he to himself. 'Eh ! and it's only richt I should be acquainted wi' the lassie mysel. It wadna dae for ower Jamie to mak' a misfit in marriage ; that wad be waefu'. It wadna be britherly in me to see him dae that. 'Tis my duty, therefore, to see gin she be weel-faur'd.'

He even went so far as to give this opinion of the matter to Jamie. Imagine Jamie's exceeding wrath. But Alec was not to be balked of an opportunity of doing his duty—he, at least, had not forgotten his Scottish interest in the welfare of his nearest kin. So with this brotherly object in view, he one afternoon got away from his work earlier than usual, and by the aid of many directions given by kind strangers, he wended his way to the Phillips-Brooke house. As he approached the mansion, he was much struck with the broad expanse of ground in which it stood.

Losh ! mon,' he exclaimed to himself, 'what a big mistak' I ha'e made o' the house. Why, it's unco gran' folk stays here, far granner than ower Jamie could e'er

ha'e cocked his beaver tae. But it's na vera pawkie for ony ane tae tak' a wife aboon his ain gait in life; it might bring aboot an unco lot o' clashing amang his ain kith an' kin. An' ower Jamie wad tak' sair wi' that.'

However, he knocked at the door, and asked if Mrs. Phillips-Brooke was in. He gave his name, and was ushered into the drawing-room, where Mrs. Phillips-Brooke and her daughters were awaiting visitors.

'Mr. McTavish!' said the servant, by way of introduction.

Mrs. Phillips-Brooke, whose back was towards the door as honest Alec entered, rose to her feet and turned with a smile of greeting on her face and an outstretched hand. Imagine her surprise on being brought face to face with the new McTavish. She tried to screen her astonishment, as a well-bred lady should, but her expression and attitude lost their affability, and assumed a sternness ill-disguised.

'Ye ne'er ha'e seen mysel, 'tis true, leddy,' said Alec, unabashed. 'But I ha'e nae doot ye'll be acquainted wi' ane o' my kin. An' that's my excase for ca'in' on you. I'm Alec McTavish, leddy; an' my brither Jamie is unco friendly wi' your folks, and, as I'm tauld, hae plighted his troth tae your ain fair dochter; ane o' these weel-faur'd lasses, na doot.' And he motioned his hand respectfully in the direction of the two girls, who sat astonished. 'Aweel, my brither Jamie has na thocht it worth his while to introduce me tae ye, leddy, sae I ha' takken courage to present mysel.'

'So it seems,' said Mrs. Phillips-Brooke. 'Pray be seated.' Alec sat.

'I ha'e my doots o' Jamie bein' britherly in this matter,' he continued, 'for it is nae mair than richt that his ain kith an' kin should be acquainted wi' the lassie wha is to be ane o' owersels sae soon. Yes, I ha'e my doots.'

'We are very pleased to make your acquaintance, I'm sure—very pleased,' said Mrs. Phillips-Brooke. 'Your brother should have told us of your coming. You have quite taken us by surprise.' Mrs. Phillips-Brooke had regained her composure, and was bent on being diplomatic. 'And how long have you been in the colony?' she asked.

''Tis ony four weeks sin' I landed in this kintry.'

'Indeed,' said Mrs. Phillips-Brooke. 'And how long have you been amongst us here?'

'The same time, leddy.'

'Indeed,' said Mrs. Phillips-Brooke.

'An' richt glad I was to get off the water, after sae muckle birlin' an' tossin' on the ship as I ha' put up wi' sin' I left Scotland.'

'And I hope your mother was well when you left her,' said Mrs. Phillips-Brooke.

'My mither, guid woman, has been deid nae less than ten years, leddy,' said Alec. 'What wi' the racket o' mindin' the shop—mither sold chandlers an' sechlike wares tae the sailors an' the ships—an' what wi' the worry o' gettin' skilling for Jamie an' I, she, puir bodie, syne sickened an' deid. An' after her death, Jamie, wha

was a bit glaikit callan then, got cauld that threatened consumption, an' the dochter, skilfu' bodie, thocht it best he should come oot tae this part o' the warld. An' mair than weel he's prospered here.'

'That was in Elgin, I suppose? remarked Mrs. Phillips-Brooke, upon whom the true situation of things was beginning to dawn, while her daughters sat by, their faces a mixture of surprise and amusement.

'In Elgin? Naw!' said Alec. ''Twas in Greenock mither died. There was she born, an' there she lived, an' a guid life it was. An' we twa sma' wee laddies lived there wi' her, an' we were vera camstrarie, though meanin' nae ill, aye steerin' round the toon, an' gettin' aye mucky, an' ower clouts torn. An' syne ower playin' truant was a girt sorrow tae her, an' all the pawkish tricks we were at. Aye, we were wild, wee callans. Aweel, Jamie was 'prenticed to Maister MacIntyre the saddler; an' that gied mither mair rest an' peace, for Jamie was fractious in the hame, beyond all reckoning. Howsoever, he was tae peelywally for that trade, and though Greenock is a braw place for bonnie folks, an' breeds a stour race o' men, yet 'twas keen for Jamie; an' his coming here's the outcome. For mysel, I'm stour eneugh an' braw.' And he thumped his chest with his bony fist, in token.'

'You seem so, certainly,' said Mrs. Phillips-Brooke. 'And how was your uncle Angus, when you left? Your brother has often spoken of him to us. I think you have an Uncle Angus?'

'Oh, Uncle Angus was vera weel, awhile back before

I left,' said Alec. 'But trade is bad in his part o' the kintry, what wi' strikes an' trades unions an' ae thing an' anither. Puir bodie, he maks but a scanty livin', these days. Uncle Angus was a contractor man, you must know, an' Glasgow was *his* toon, an' a fine braw trade in building he did, in the good days gone by. But Misfortune cam' wi' her sour face, an' gied him one glance o' her spitfu' e'e, an' crippled him to bankruptcy. An' 'tis unco sad to see the guid mon, at his age, striving against puirtooth, wi' the warld gone all awry wi' him. These days, he has takken tae a barrow, and gangs aboot the toon hawking kail, or fish, maybe, to get a livin'. Puir boddie.'

This news was a great blow to Mrs. Phillips-Brooke, and she expressed her state of mind by almost letting her tea-cup drop, so great was her surprise. Madeline felt impelled to laugh, but by a great effort checked herself, and laid tight hold of Adela, who too was seized with a paroxysm which caused her to bury her face in her handkerchief, and threatened to roll her from off her seat on to the floor. Then Madeline giggled. And giggling is contagious. Adela giggled too; and soon, to his amazement, Alec saw these young ladies in a state of uncontrolled laughter, the reason of which he was at a loss to explain. Suddenly, without taking further notice of him, the two girls hurried from the room, leaving their respected mother sitting grimly face to face with the gaunt Scot.

* * * * *

That evening, Alec told Jamie he had seen his *fiancee*.

'Aye, an' a gran' bit lassie she be, Jamie, mon, though aiblins she was a trifle gi'en tae owermeikle giggling.' But when Jamie, anxious to know what had transpired, and suspecting that trouble would follow the encounter, asked for particulars of the meeting, that he might see how the land lay, he found Alec reticent. At first Jamie blurted out his wrath, at Alec's impudent interference. But that had not the effect of making his brother speak. Then Jamie calmed himself, and asked politely for particulars. But Alec was silent. Then he almost besought Alec to tell him how he was received and what had happened. Alec said nothing. Then Jamie's anger broke out in all its strength, and he cursed Alec most deeply for having the impertinence to call upon his friends. Then Alec stood up and delivered himself in thick Scotch; he told Jamie that he was ashamed of him and of the game he had been playing, of his lies and subterfuges, of his many devices whereby he had persuaded his friends of the existence of his spurious relations and their counterfeit titles. He called down shame on him for his folly, and taunted him upon the manner in which he had received him, 'his ain brither.' For the veil was rent in twain: he saw now the reason of Jamie's conduct.

Then Jamie became snivellingly humble. He confessed his guilt; begged his brother not to desert him; even asked him to lie for him.

Oh! oh!' he whined, breaking into his native brogue, 'I'm muckle feared, mon, ye ha'e been like the old sow i' the leddy's chamur, au' ha'e caused an unco mess ye dinna wat' a'.'

That selfsame evening, Jamie went to glean news of this strange interview from the Phillip-Brookes themselves. His heart near failed him as he walked up the long drive to their house. He feared Nemesis had come, but he meant to wear a bold face, and worst her, if possible. He was greeted by Mrs. Phillips-Brooke herself. The daughters were absent from the meeting. And there followed a scene which my pen is unable to describe—both lost their tempers ; Jamie first lied, than cringed ; Uncle Angus and the family estates came in for a good deal of criticism : and the end of it was that James McTavish passed out of the house a 'jilted' man.

* * * * * *

A few weeks after her engagement was broken off, Miss Adela went shopping in the town.

She came out of a jeweller's, and then went into a draper's shop. There she bought some hairpins and various women's trifles—she was served by none other than Alec McTavish himself. He stood attentive behind the counter, all the seriousness of the Scot upon his countenance, attending to the trade he had followed but unsuccessfully in his native land.

'An' this is a vera fine day, to-day, Miss,' he said. 'The climate o' this land 's vera gran', an' mair fit for fairies than where I cam' frae. Yes, Miss, ye'll most-like find these same pins, new-fangled an' crooked though they be, mair handy for the hair than the auld-farrant anes.'

'Thank you, I expect I shall,' said Miss Adela, and she took up the packet. As she quickly turned to leave the

shop, honest Alec bowed to her over his counter the most respectful of bows, but the young lady deigned not to acknowledge his salute. When she stood on the pavement, which she had reached as soon as possible, she descried Greeves walking on the other side of the street. She raised her parasol to attract his attention, but he failed to see the signal. She uttered a low whistle, but this means likewise miscarried. She coughed very audibly, in that peculiar manner which is so noticeable and so vulgar; and this last effort succeeded.

Greeves crossed over the street, and stood by her side.

'How are you?' she said, holding out her daintily gloved hand to greet him,

'Oh, thanks, I'm pretty beamish. How are you?'

'I'm very well. Were you awfully shocked at my dreadful manners just now?

'Oh, no. I'm used to them, you see.'

'Thanks. I don't care if you are, you may be certain of that. But I want to talk seriously.'

'Indeed!'

'Indeed, I do. Do you remember the Sclaters' dance?'

'I believe I do. I have good enough cause to.'

'Do you remember that you asked me a certain question then?'

'I do. And, further, I remember what answer you gave.'

'No, no, I gave you no answer. But would you like me to give it you now—I will if you like.'

'It wouldn't be necessary to repeat what you said then, you know. But if you've got anything to add to it, you've got me here and I must listen.'

'Yes I have,' said Miss Adela. 'I have got this to add.' As she spoke she put a small packet into his hand. He undid the pink string, unwrapped the tissue paper, and inside the small leather box discovered a gold ring in which was set an onyx stone, whereon were engraved his initials.

'There,' she said, 'that is my answer. Do you like it?'

'It's very pretty, certainly. And so that's for me, is it? That's your way of setting things right, I suppose?'

'I hope it will do so.'

'Thanks, tremendously; it will, I assure you. You've kept me a long while waiting, but I mustn't complain: you have given me what I had almost ceased to hope for.' He pressed her daintily-gloved hand as he walked beside her.

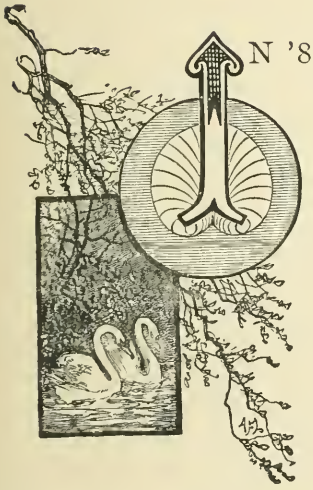
* * * * * *

But by the time that the wedding cards were sent out, Jamie McTavish had vanished. He had got himself transferred to another branch of his Bank. And the glory of him had departed.

UPON THE MOUNTAINS OF BETHER.

Upon the Mountains of Bether.

Until the day break and the shadows flee away.
Solomon's Song.



IN '88 the Alexander Roller Skating Rink opened—commenced its first season, that was how the bill-posters put it. But inside a twelvemonth, it had closed its doors; for in that time its patrons had become satiated with its blaring brass band, and the obtrusive gaudiness of its flag-bedraped walls, and the dust, and noise, and the utter emptiness of continually gyrating in the one same monotonous circle. But when the end of the farce was come, it was found that the Alexander Roller Skating Rink was responsible for many broken arms, sprained ankles, contused knees—and for other things besides. It was also responsible for the meeting of Mabel Gray and Ernest Clinton.

Mabel Gray was a girl who could not fail to attract the eye, or to awaken in the imagination all manner of pleasing thoughts; and yet her presence made itself prominent involuntarily. And that was where her

charm lay, doubtless. Certainly she never did anything to make herself conspicuous: she *was* conspicuous, enviably so. For one thing, she was so shapely; for another, she looked so healthy, and held herself so nobly, as a girl in the pride of her youth should. Dark of complexion, black of hair, her eyes full and brown, the only bright colour in her face was in her lips; and her figure was one of those flexible, and rather heavy figures, whose owners usually possess a lazy good nature and an indulgent disposition.

But with all this, she came of humble parents. Born in a deep lonely gorge amongst the mountains, she had there scarcely any other playmate than her twin sister, and not much companionship other than that of the great forest trees and the bold over-hanging mountains. And for schooling she was sent with her sister, when they were of the requisite age, to the nearest village, and boarded with the schoolmaster for five days out of seven—the gorge's population being too scanty to warrant a school of its own.

But one night, a great storm burst over the country, and in the narrow gorge the wind roared as through a funnel, and honest, hard-worked John Gray, fearing danger to his cattle grazing in the half-cleared paddocks, where the bare, naked boughs of the dead and half-burnt trees were falling upon all sides, sallied forth with a lantern, to drive his beasts into the small and safe enclosure near the house. Next morning, he was found underneath a fallen tree, with his back broken.

And the shock of his death was too great for his wife.

She forsook the lonely glen ; sold the farm ; took a small cottage in the village, and there she and her children lived upon her little capital and on what money she could earn by an eclectic practice of the obstetric art, for which she had some fitness.

But soon the two girls were past schooling, and then Loo, the elder, became a probationer in the school where she had so long been taught, and Mabel went down to town and was apprenticed to a draper, and worked, as her mother used to say, 'at the dress-making.' The widow was soon glad to receive what little pecuniary help her daughters could give her towards keeping her humble roof above her head. And perhaps circumstances would have developed so as to have enabled her to end her days in peace and in that honest pride which is begotten of an immunity from evil report, and is nurtured by the contemplation of an unsullied name, so prized and so jealously guarded by such as she. But here the Alexander Skating Rink and Ernest Clinton come in.

Young Clinton was a shipping-office clerk, at some thirty shillings a week ; twenty of which went in board and lodging, and the rest in clothes and amusements. And his age it was just nineteen, and his constitution was strong and hearty, and he was a young man subject to like passions as are full-grown men. And when he saw Mabel Gray at the Rink, it was not long before he found some excuse for addressing her. And she, in her inexperience, was pleased that so singularly handsome a young man should pay her attention.

But at the Rink Mabel Gray soon made numerous other acquaintances, of all manners of stations in life ; some rich, and some, though she may not have known it, straitened in their means, some handsome, and some otherwise ; yet she preferred the laughing, jolly boy before all the others—he was so fair and fresh, and so full of laughter, and had such a curly, yellow head of hair, and such a merry, wicked twinkle in his eyes. So that, though she was obliged to divide her favours amongst many admirers, she gave him the largest share.

And Mabel Gray had no fine scruples about *etiquette* or *appearances*. Such things did not enter into her life. And so, every evening that she went to the Rink, Clinton walked home with her, nominally as a protection. But, at length, she found that the sums remitted to her mother became microscopically small ; and then her conscience bade her choose which she would serve : her own pleasure, or her mother's necessities. And her love for her mother prevailed, and, though it caused a pang, she determined to abandon roller skating. But here her good angel, as she thought, came to her aid ; she was given a season ticket, to admit her to the gaudily be-flagged and crowded scene—and the ticket was a present from the young shipping clerk. Therefore, she felt that she must, perforce, make some return, to show her gratitude, beyond frequently allowing him to skate with her. But, when she cast about for the means, she found she entirely lacked them, save in the bestowal of a greater and deeper measure of regard. And that latter she gave freely, though not unasked.

Youth is ever pressing onwards: Youth never stands still. When Life's cup is raised to Youth's lips, Youth must needs drink, and that, too, regardless of consequences. Youth spells in plain letters thoughtlessness: Youth flouts experience in the face. Youth would read of the book of Life for itself, and taste of Life's pleasures; and, alas! having tasted, knows not when or where to stop. Therefore Youth stands sadly in need of a guide: but, then, Youth will not be curbed by bit or bridle. Therefore Youth is in very evil case. And yet there is a salvation for Youth—but Mabel Gray and young Clinton lacked knowledge of that salvation.

These young people had no guide but that which was in themselves, and that guide, yet again alas! was named Pleasure. Not that they wished to ignore conscience and restraint, but that they had a dim idea that these two might be, in some way, comfortably dovetailed in with Pleasure. And so they careered onward, and gradually conscience and restraint were left behind, and the very thought of them was soon lost in the alluring, intoxicating, well-nigh maddening fumes that rise from the cup of Love.

And thirty shillings a week may keep a shipping clerk alive, but not a shipping clerk and a wife—besides, have shipping-office clerks of nineteen, or even twenty years, any business with a wife? And while young Clinton was anxiously looking for an increase of pay——but let us get on to the next scene of the drama.

* * * * * *

It was a dark night, and as the narrow-gauged and

jolting train drew up at the small railway station, two persons alighted : a young man, and a girl still younger. It was a cold, frosty night, and the young man quickly buttoned up his overcoat—the girl was already wrapped up, so warmly and voluminously, that her face was almost hidden, and her figure entirely so.

They walked quickly away from the station, and were soon lost to their fellow-passengers. After passing up the street of straggling, detached wooden houses, they struck off into a by-lane, and stopped at the door of a small cottage. The girl knocked ; and the door was opened by a neat though humbly-dressed woman. And the light of a candle fell upon the faces of the two outside.

Mabel !' exclaimed the woman, as she held the candle above her head that she might get a better view of the girl and her companion. 'Come in, girl. And who'd have thought of you comin' up, at this time of night? Come in, and take a bit of supper,' she said to the young man.

The girl passed in, and kissed the woman. 'Yes, mother,' she said ; 'it's pretty cold out, to-night. I've brought up Mister Clinton with me.'

'I'm pleased to see you,' said the woman to the young man. 'I know you, from what my girl here has told me of your walking with her.' She brought forward a chair that stood against the wall, and motioned to the young man to sit himself down. 'Loo's at the school house,' she continued ; 'she's gone to sit awhile with Missis Lukin, as hasn't been well : and Mister Lukin being gone out all day, like—it being Saturday—Loo she

thought it would be a kindness. But she'll be back almost any minute now. Come, take off your things, Mabel girl, and draw up to the fire.'

Mabel did as she was asked, and, at the doing, her mother started, as well she might.

'What!' she exclaimed. 'What! And so that's how you come back to your mother, is it? That's why you are come home, girl, almost at midnight, when it's so dark no one can see you? And you,' she said, turning to the young man, 'you've come to keep her in countenance, I reckon!'

'Oh, mother, mother, don't, don't!' cried the girl, putting her hands up to her face, to hide her shame. 'We are going to get married, we are, indeed, as soon as Ernest has got a rise in pay. Oh, don't, don't be cruel!'

'And so you've brought back my girl that I may bear all the shame and disgrace of her, and you get off free?' continued the mother, regardless of the interruption and plea of her daughter. 'And you call yourself a gentleman, or make pretence to be such. Pah! *I* call a gentleman him that not only wears fine clothes, but does fine actions, nor doesn't ruin young girls as have been brought up respectable and with a better name than yours, if the truth was known. And when it's my girl you've ruined, I call you what you are—a vile young profligate. You and your fine clothes! You may pass for some sort of a gentleman with empty townsfolk, but in the country we call such as you by your proper name——.' But enough; we will spare the reader.

The young man rose, and took up his hat. 'I came

here not to be vilified, but to say that I shall be ready and glad to do everything——'

'You came to say!' screamed the woman. 'Yes, after all you've *done*, you come to *say*; to say how you meant no harm; to say as how you mean to marry the girl, someday, when the moon's turned to green cheese, and when me and mine are disgraced and a byword in the whole village!'

And just then the door opened, and, with a gust of cold night air, Loo entered. 'What, you here, Mabel?' she cried. 'Well, well now. Come to stay over Sunday?' And she went up to her sister, and bent over her, and kissed her. 'Well, I *am* glad.'

'She's come to stay over the winter, more like,' said the mother. 'But you're forgetting your visitor. It's a pity, when such folks pay us such honour, not to acknowledge it. Besides, the young gentleman can't be staying here all night. He must be getting back to town.'

Loo stepped across the room, and held out her hand, and said, 'I almost guess who you are. Mabel has spoken about you in her letters; but she might have brought you up before. Of course—but I hardly need say it—I'm very glad to see you.' The young fellow took her proffered hand.

'It's good of you to say so,' he said. 'I don't deserve it.'

'That you don't,' broke in Mrs. Gray. 'There, you've spoken truth, for once.'

'Mother!' exclaimed Loo. 'How *can* you talk so?

What *do* you mean? And with Mabel sitting there, too.'

'Yes, she well may sit,' cried her mother. 'Stand up, girl, stand up, and show yourself.' Her daughter did as she was bidden. 'Now, Loo, look at her, and then at him yonder, and make another of your pretty speeches to my fine lady and gentleman.'

The only reply Loo made was to run forward to her sister and clasp her in her arms.

* * * * *

It was an unusual picture. A man, full-grown, was sitting on the hard edge of a grave which was eight feet square, flat on the top and at the sides, solid, and built up some three feet from the ground, whilst, in the very centre of the top face, a plain oblong slab of marble was let into the cement. A small boy careered and jigged round the table-like surface of the grave, but in his antics forbore to put his tiny foot upon the marble slab, on which was engraved the name of the sleeper who reposed beneath.

The child was about five years of age, with an extremely large head covered with light hair cropped very close, and he was dressed in a serge blouse and short knickerbockers to match, and wore on his head a sailor's cap whose ribbon bore the legend H.M.S. *Nancy Belle.*

The man was fair too, rather untidily dressed in well cut clothes which had been very smart when new. His face bore a far-away expression, as though his thoughts were amongst the nest of hills which, covered with scrub and 'bush,' clustered in the immediate front of the landscape. Some of the higher peaks might have laid just

claim to have been called mountains, for, here and there, they were patched with snow, while their bases stood deeply green, and black where the shadows fell.

The little boy, after careering several times round his circuit, stood still, and watched the man's face, and then his eyes turned to the apparent object of his elder's thoughts. 'Those fings there is *manuka* flowers,' he said, pointing towards the neighbouring hills with his tiny hand; and he added, as if to clinch the matter, 'Aunty Loo says so. Aunty Loo says ve little men of ve mountains come and spwinkle vem about at night when it's all quite dark.' His companion seemed scarcely to notice the child. 'It's to make ve hills all patchy: ve Jabberwock doesn't like fings patchy—he likes fings stweaky.' The little fellow had a habit of raising his voice to a piping shrillness whenever he wished to emphasize a point. 'Stweaky' was very much such a point. But still the man scarcely seemed to mark the emphasis. Then, half to himself and half to the man, the small boy continued, 'But I don't like ve Jabberwock, wiff his jaws that bite and his claws that scwatch. I don't believe vere's such a person. Aunty Loo says he comes and snatches up little boys what's naughty. But he hasn't never snatched up *me*, and I've bin dreffle naughty lots and lots of times; but that's always bin when I've had a pain and felt all quirmy-quirmy inside —and then I can't help it. Aunty Loo says so.' The man continued to gaze abstractedly at the hills in front of him, his mind too preoccupied to thoroughly grasp what the child was babbling of.

'Where was it you said you had a pain, Dick?' he asked.

'*No*,' said Dick, his voice deprecatingly reduced to its deepest tone. 'No. *Haven't* got a pain.' A symptom of that kind usually meant physic—for Dick's was a constitution that needed care.

'All right, glad to hear it, Dick. What were you talking about?'

'Only about ve ole Jabberwock. I tell Aunty Loo vat's where ve Jabberwock lives,' and he turned, and pointed with his diminutive finger to the distant blue range of mountains that loomed upon the horizon behind the man's back. 'He doesn't live in vese mountains *here*. He lives in vose mountains *vere*. And if he came to fetch me when I'm in bed—ve Jabberwocky's like a more-pork and only comes out in ve night—then it would be morning before he got here. And what would ve Jabberwock do ven, poor fing? He'd go blink, blink at ve sun, to stop his eyes from going blind, and ve men would come wiff guns and fings and shoot him dead. And vere'd be no more Jabberwocky any more.' And this knotty question being solved, the little fellow commenced to jig and dance as before. But this time he encroached too near the edge of the grave, and would have fallen over, but that the man thrust out his hand and clutched him by his baggy little breeches.

'Steady, you young Dutchman, or you'll come to some grief,' he said, as he drew the child towards him.

'Why do you call me a Dutchman for, father?'

'Because you *are* a young Dutchman—you wear such funny bags.'

'Do Dutchmens wear bags?'

'Of course they do.'

'But my trousers aren't bags: vey are *knickerbockers*.'

'Just so. And Knickerbocker was a Dutchman; and if you wear knickerbockers you must be a Dutchman too. There, Dick, I've beaten this time.'

The little fellow laughed, and began his dance again.

'Now, have a care, young one,' said his father, 'or you'll tumble off, and break into two halves. And then I shall only have the pieces to take back to Aunty Loo.'

'Pieces of what, father?'

'Broken pieces of you.'

'Aunty Loo would scold you, dreffle.'

'But why, my little son?

'Aunty Loo doesn't like bwoken fings. When I brought back ve pieces of her miciscope, all bwoken, from ve back yard, where I'd played wiff it and dwopped it, she said *such* fings.'

'You young Turk, I should think so!' And then he asked, after a pause, 'But does Aunty Loo scold you *much?*

'Yes, sometimes—when I let Satan get inside me. It makes Aunty Loo *so* sad—and *so* cwoss.' Dick wagged his head seriously, from side to side, as he said this—it was something particularly grave. 'And ven she smacks me on my little posterio, to make me good.'

'Indeed. I hope it does. But why don't you kick

Satan out, Dick, instead of letting him make you naughty?'

'Because I can't.'

'But why can't you?'

'Because—I must fink a little while: it's a werry hard queshun. Is it a widdle, father?'

'No.'

'Then is it because—? I fink I know.'

'Well, Dick?'

'Because when ve devil's inside me, and my foot's outside, I *can't* kick him.'

And the man laughed; and because the problem was Q.E.D., the small boy jigged again. But presently he stopped, and sat himself down by his father's side with that bustling decision peculiar to children.

'And what are all vese gwaves for?' he asked.

'These are where they bury people, when they are dead.'

'And what are vey dead for?'

'Because we all die. It's part of the programme. The trees die, and the flowers die, and the cattle die, and the birds die, everything dies. And when we die, we leave our bodies, and fly up, go right up through the blue; and they bury our bodies.'

The little fellow turned his own blue eyes to the sky, and for some time he gazed up into the azure of the heavens, his face wearing a thoughtful, puzzled expression. But this problem seemed to be beyond him. He could make nothing of it. So raising his eyebrows till his forehead puckered, and quaintly smacking his lips

together, he directed his gaze upon the gravestone immediately in front of him.

'And what are the gwavestones for?' he asked.

'So that we sha'n't forget who are buried beneath.'

'And who's beneath that gwave?' The child pointed to the grave on which his eyes were fixed.

'"John Archibald Summers. Died June 1st, 1885. Aged 47. *His end was peace.*"'

'And who was Mister Archibald Summers?'

'I really don't know, Dick.'

'And who was bewwid under that gwave?' The small boy pointed to an Aberdeen granite monolith, not far off.

'"Elizabeth Swainford. Died January 3rd, 1875. Aged 79 years. *The Lord forsaketh not His saints.* Psalm xxxvii., 28."'

'And who was *she*, father?'

'A very old woman. That's all I know.'

'And who was bewwid here—under here?' And the small boy patted with his dimpled hand the hard cement of the grave on which they sat.

The man turned round, and read from the marble tablet. "Mabel Gray. Died August 14th, 1889. Aged nineteen years."

'And who was Mabel Gway, father?'

'Mabel Gray was your mother, my child, Aunty Loo's sister.'

'And what did they call her Mabel Gway for?'

'That was her name.'

'And has she gone up through the blue, too?'

But his father did not answer. He took off his hat, and stood for some moments by the grave's side with closed eyes and his hand on the child's head. And the little boy looked up at his father's face, to see why his question was not answered.

Then the man stooped, and took the child's hand in his. 'Come, little son,' he said, 'and let us be going. Aunty Loo will have your tea ready, and I must catch my train back to town.'

And, hand in hand, they walked down the gravelled path, by the diminutive wooden church, and so out of the grave-yard back into the world.

THE MIDDLE WATCH.

Blackest, intensest night rests on the sea ;
An inky gloom envelopes hull and spar.
And as the vessel glides on silently,
We see no welcome star.

But mark ! Yonder, the very faintest gleam
Fitfully shimmers on the ocean's edge.
Shipmate, good cheer ! For yonder feeble beam
Is day-break's certain pledge.

But lo ! 'tis gone. I cannot see it there.
The heavens are black again with densest clouds ;
And all the ocean's face is dark and drear :
The wind moans through the shrouds .

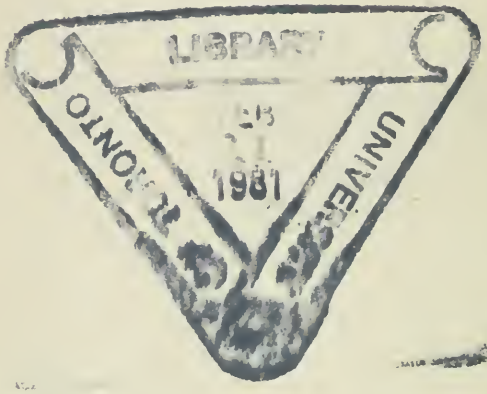
Alack ! the Middle Watch, when on the deep
There rests a deadly-black, funereal pall,
And o'er the sea strange creatures seem to creep,
And 'gainst the vessel fall.

Then doubts throng to the mind, and thoughts of wreck,
And dangerous derelicts that helpless ride,
And hidden reefs—the gloom that hides the deck
A thousand rocks may hide.

But, shipmate, saw you not the light again ;
Beyond the vessel's head a brighter ray ?
' Tis true ! Outlined I plainly see the quivering main
Stretch many a mile away.

Great beams of light shoot out across the sky
Like fingers of th' ethereal Deity,
Guiding the billowy clouds that sail on high
And ships that sail the sea.

And from the ocean's edge the great red sun,
Dispersing clouds and scud, and hurrying fast,
Bursts up in glory, and the night is done,
And day has come at last !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